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P8

Will alter tunnel road plan if needed: DKS on Lalbagh fears

Dy CM walks with public in garden, assures no damage due to proposed infra

ASHWIN B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar launches 'Walk with Bengaluru Citizens' at Lalbagh on Saturday. DH PHOTO/ ASHWIN B M

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Saturday assured the public that the proposed tunnel road project in Bengaluru wouldn't pose any threat to the iconic Lalbagh botanical garden in the heart of the city.

Shivakumar was interacting with people during a morning walk at Lalbagh. Leaving his official car, the deputy CM entered the garden and launched the 'Walk with Bengaluru Citizens' initiative at 7 am. While walking, he listened to a barrage of civic complaints, ranging from hectic traffic and potholes to garbage disposal crisis.

But topping the list was a pointed question on the proposed tunnel road, which has kindled fears of damage to the Lalbagh garden. Shivakumar brushed aside the concerns and said there won't be any damage to the garden. He, however, said the plan could be modified if needed.

"Lalbagh is a public property and we will take all possible measures to protect it. There is no need of Lalbagh land for the tunnel road project. The tunnel road passes under the ground. Officials have marked the entry and exit points near the Lalbagh rock hill. I will inspect the place. We will change the project plan if needed."

He further said the project needed half acre of land behind the rock hill for the entry and exit points. "Around one acre will be needed temporarily for storage during construction," he explained, adding that this would be cleared after the construction.

The deputy CM's casual walk turned into a public grievance hearing as hundreds of citizens poured out their woes, with the core issues revolving around hectic traffic, potholes and garbage crisis.

▸ Lalbagh, Page 7

Rs 10 cr for modernisation

Shivakumar announced an allocation of Rs 10 crore for Lalbagh. The fund will be utilised to revamp the rose garden, establish a free toilet system, and ensure the presence of a doctor and an ambulance.

> Lalbagh is a public property and we will take all possible measures to protect it. There is no need of Lalbagh land for the tunnel road project. The tunnel road passes under the ground. Officials have marked the entry and exit points near the Lalbagh rock hill. I will inspect the place. We will change the project plan if needed.
> **D K Shivakumar,** Dy CM

First Robotic-Assisted Revision Knee Replacement in South India Using CORI System

Aster RV Hospital successfully performed the first robotic-assisted revision total knee replacement surgery in South India, positioning itself among the pioneering centres in India with this advanced capability. Unlike a standard primary knee replacement, revision surgery involves the intricate challenge of dealing with pre-existing implants, substantial bone loss, and altered knee anatomy. The CORI robotic system played a critical role, allowing surgeons to perform the procedure with millimetre accuracy by generating a highly precise 3D mapping of the joint.

Dr. J V Srinivas
Director, Aster RV Institute of Advanced Orthopaedics and Robotic Surgery

Dr. J V Srinivas, DIRECTOR, Aster RV Institute of Advanced Orthopaedics and Robotic Surgery, said *"This technology uniquely benefits revision surgery by enabling the surgeon to take the minimum bone cuts necessary to fit the new implant, preserving vital bone stock that is often already compromised in such cases. Conventional surgery typically requires a fixed amount of bone removal, which may not be ideal for complex revision scenarios. The precision and customisation afforded by the CORI system mark a significant advancement in orthopaedic care, translating into better alignment, improved joint function, and potentially longer implant longevity."*

For surgeons, the use of robotics provides a significant advantage through real-time 3D imaging, allowing detailed surgical planning and precise intraoperative guidance. This technology helps ensure accurate bone cuts and optimal implant positioning, which are critical factors in reducing risks such as misalignment and instability. For patients, this translates to more natural knee movement, less postoperative pain, and a faster, smoother recovery experience, ultimately improving their overall outcome and quality of life.

Dr. J V Srinivas further added, *"Robotic-assisted revision knee replacement is a game changer in managing complex cases where preserving bone and achieving precise implant positioning are critical. This technology not only improves surgical outcomes but also offers patients a better quality of life post-surgery."*

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New ward map sparks political row over population mismatch

Redivision 'engineered' to help Cong when polls are held: BJP

NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

The ink is barely dry on Bengaluru's new ward map, but the population mismatch is already glaring: some wards house nearly 10,000 more residents than others.

This is significant because average ward size itself is about 21,000. The imbalance could influence electoral outcomes, tilt civic budgets and cripple equitable development.

While the delimitation commission insists it has followed the population criterion fixed by government, BJP MLAs argue that the redivision was 'engineered' to ensure victory of Congress candidates in the yet-to-be-scheduled civic body polls.

Earlier this week, Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) published population figures of all 368 wards, along with constituency-wise breakup of wards and maps.

Data shows the population of wards ranges from as few as 13,969 residents to 29,704 across the five new corporations.

Former councillor N R Ramesh said the Congress had won only two wards under Jayanagar Assembly constituency in the last, now-dissolved, BBMP.

'M' factor

"After new delimitation, it hopes to win six wards. This is being done by distributing Muslim and slum voters of Guruvappanapalya, Tilak Nagar, and Bismillah Nagar across different wards. By this, wards have become shapeless and interior roads, instead of major corridors, have been used as boundary markers," he said. RR Nagar MLA N Munirathna, whose constituency has been split across three corporations, said wards like JP Park and Yeshwantpur — where Muslims are predominant — are smaller in size compared to other wards with a large Hindu population.

"This is being done to increase winnability of Congress candidates while suppressing the voice of the majority community".

He said the newly carved Bangarappa Nagara ward in Bengaluru South and the RR Nagar ward in Bengaluru West each have about 40,000 voters — nearly twice the average ward size.

Rajajinagar MLA Suresh Kumar said the delimitation had damaged the low-income group pockets of Saneguruvanahalli, which has now been split across multiple wards "just in the hope of winning polls".

Former MLA of Mahadevapura Aravind Limbavali opposed the move to take Bellandur out of Mahadevapura and place it under Bengaluru South Corporation. "If revenue is the issue, can Kolar district be brought under Bengaluru?," he said.

He said Doddanekundi — which is a single layout — has been split across three wards, creating hardship for residents.

Third, he said, one booth of Marathahalli, which falls inside the Ring Road, has been brought under Panathur. "This is unscientific," Limbavali said.

Yelahanka MLA S R Vishwanath believes delimitation will lead to further delay in civic body polls.

"Generally, polling booths are kept intact while drawing ward boundaries. In the latest exercise, officials have divided booths. This will lead to lot of problems like corrections in electoral rolls, which is not easy and may eventually delay polls," he said.

A senior official of the delimitation commission said the window to file objections was still open & inputs would be considered proactively.

Additional block with 450 beds planned at Kidwai

Outpatients to be treated as inpatients till final lab reports ready

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Department of Medical Education, in an attempt to improve the quality of care and address the shortage of beds at the state-run Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology (KMIO), is planning to establish an additional block with 450 beds on its current campus on Dr H Marigowda Road.

At a review meeting recently, Medical Education Minister Dr Sharan Prakash Patil directed Kidwai officials to submit a detailed blueprint for the new block as soon as possible.

Speaking at the meeting, Dr Patil said poor people travel from far-off places for treatment at Kidwai, during which they sell their homes and lands to fund the treatment.

To put an end to all of this, the facilities must be expanded, he added.

Currently, Kidwai has 720 beds, but the number of patients far exceeds the available capacity.

The minister instructed officials to admit outpatients as inpatients until their final investigation reports are ready, so that patients do not face difficulties while waiting.

He announced that peripheral cancer centres (PCCs) are set to become operational in Tumakuru, Mysuru, Mandya and Karwar in the next few months.

Additionally, centres are being planned in Ballari, Shivamogga, Raichur, Bidar and Belagavi. The existing PCC in Kalaburagi will be upgraded from 80 to 210 beds in a new building, he said.

Dr Patil instructed Kidwai director Dr T Naveen to pay full salary to nurses who took maternity leave in the past, as over 30 contract and outsourced nurses were denied full salary in 2021.

Six labourers succumb to injuries

BENGALURU, DHNS: Six labourers, who were grievously injured following a fire accident in Bengaluru South, have succumbed at the hospital, police said on Saturday.

The deceased are Manarul Sheikh, 40; Tajabul Sheikh, 26; Jahed Ali, 32; Hasan Malik, 42; Jiyabur Sheikh, 40; and Shafijul Sheikh, 36. Their companion, Noor Jamal, 21, remains critical, officials said.

Police said the labourers were part of a construction project at Bhimenahalli in Bidadi. They lived in a 30-sq-foot shed at the site.

Investigation found that on October 6, at around 2.30 am, fire broke out while they were asleep in the shed.

A security guard noticed it and alerted the site incharge, who shifted the injured to hospital, where six workers succumbed to burns.

Preliminary probe showed the victims had had forgotten to turn the knob off of the LPG cylinder before sleeping. One of them had gotten up to light a beedi, which lit the fire as gas had leaked.

Police have registered cases against the contractor and mason Hasan Malik, site engineers and landowner.

Contractor booked after two workers die at under-construction site

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bellandur police have registered a case against a contractor after two labourers died on Friday at an under-construction site.

Police said that Amir Hussain, 33, and Montaj Ali Molla, 28, both from Sonpur, West Bengal, who were working at the DNR Arista construction site, fell to their death from the 13th floor of the building at around 3.30 pm. The slab broke suddenly, leading to their fall, police said.

The Bellandur police have booked Imperial Build Tech Pvt Ltd, the contractor on behalf of DNR Arista, and the concerned officials and site engineers under Section 106 (Causing death by negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). It is further alleged that the workers weren't provided any safety gears such as belts, helmets and jackets, an official said. "Six suspects have been secured and are being questioned," said K Parashurama, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Whitefield).

Confirming the incident, Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh, said that legal action is being initiated. "Some other workers had created a ruckus at the spot due to some delay in retrieving the body of the deceased. They have also been picked up for investigation," Singh said.

Storage in most dams shrinking as silt builds up

PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS

Of the 74 reservoirs and dams in Karnataka, the water resources department has studied the silt accumulation of only 14 over the last decade and has found increasing sedimentation in them, resulting in 3% to 28% loss of overall storage.

Officials at Karnataka Engineering Research Station (KERS), the department's nodal wing studying silt accumulation, told *DH* that a proposal to assess silt accumulation in 48 reservoirs during the next cycle of the National Hydrology Project (NHP) was sent nearly seven months ago, and so far, the state hasn't received any response from the Centre.

The exercise is expected to cost Rs 7.45 crore. Based on this study, the government prepared action plans to manage the reservoir. The study requires three years for completion.

Silt not only reduces the dam's capacity but also damages it and leads to floods. Accumulation of 32 tmcft of silt at the Tungabhadra reservoir has forced the state government to consider balancing the reservoir at Navali.

Silt not only reduces the dam's capacity but also damages it and leads to floods. Accumulation of 32 tmcft of silt at the Tungabhadra reservoir has forced the state government to consider balancing the reservoir at Navali. The sheer quantity and cost involved have thwarted several attempts by farmers and the government to remove the silt.

The sheer quantity and cost involved have thwarted several attempts by farmers and the government to remove the silt.

"Every year, nearly 0.45 tmcft of silt gets accumulated in the TB dam. The periphery of the reservoir has stagnant silt, which gets flushed downstream," said Hanumangouda Belagurki, former chairman of the Agriculture Pricing Commission.

He blamed poor maintenance for the breaking away of its crest gate.

"Had we implemented catchment area treatment plans and de-silted reservoirs on time, there would have been no need to build other dams," he said.

A member of the Upper Krishna Project Land Losers' Agitation Committee said increasing the Almatti reservoir's height could have been avoided had officials properly managed the flood inflow and outflow.

"The quantity of silt at Almatti and Narayanpur is too high to be cleared," he said.

The government dropped a plan to desilt the Harangi dam (0.83 tmcft of silt) as it was not economically feasible.

KERS director K G Mahesh said most of the Krishna basin reservoirs are getting silted due to black-cotton soil and floods in Maharashtra.

Some dams with high silt

Reservoir	Capacity	Silt accumulation
Tungabhadra	132.47 tmcft	31.61 tmcft
Narayanapur	37.84 tmcft	10.55 tmcft
Almatti	123.10 tmcft	7.55 tmcft
Hidkal	50.64 tmcft	4.98 tmcft
Hemavathy	37.10 tmcft	2.68 tmcft
K R Sagar	49.45 tmcft	2.02 tmcft
Harangi	8.5 tmcft	1.23 tmcft
Vanivilas Sagar	30.028 tmcft	0.582 tmcft

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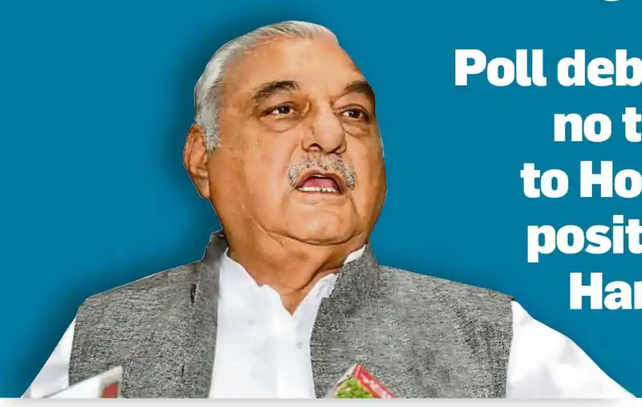


Poll debacles no threat to Hooda's position in Haryana

P9

Big Picture

Your Sunday long read that connects the everyday to the extraordinary and explores the stories between the lines

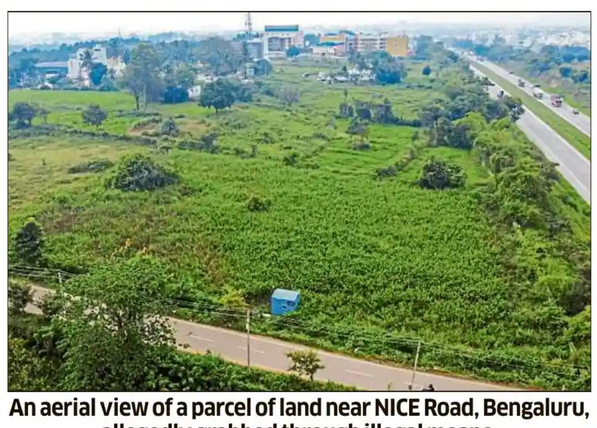
P14

Forgery & favour: How officials fuel land scams

While technology makes land grabbing harder, loopholes and political protection allow land fraud to persist

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI & NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

In 2014, a woman approached the High Court of Karnataka seeking denotification of 2 acres and 8 guntas land in Uttarahalli hobli, Bengaluru South taluk, putting the government and the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA), which had issued the final notification for the land in 1994, on the defensive.



An aerial view of a parcel of land near NICE Road, Bengaluru, allegedly grabbed through illegal means.
DH PHOTO/KRISHNAKUMAR P S

INSIGHT

During the protracted (and ongoing) legal battle, an internal inquiry by the Revenue Department found that the woman's claims were supported by multiple forged documents and tampering with original documents. The scam involved erasing a 1979 entry in the Tenancy Register to fake occupancy rights, adding survey numbers to the original tenancy rights application, and creating a khata in the name of a deceased person, only to transfer it to his wife within months. The illegal khata, in turn, enabled the petitioner to move the high court, challenging the BDA notification.

Upon enquiry, the Bengaluru Division Regional Commissioner has reported that the collusion of the tahsildar and assistant commissioner cannot be ruled out in the case. The case illustrates how land governance is undermined from within. Senior officials in the department contend that a successful land grab cannot happen without the connivance of officers at various levels. The biggest victims of land fraud are the revenue and forest departments. Around 2.5 lakh acres of forest land are under encroachment while the revenue department says 1.5 lakh land parcels have been illegally occupied. In both cases, however, the ultimate cost is borne by the public. Encroachment on forest land has intensified human-wildlife conflicts, while the loss of green lung spaces has degraded the quality of life.

Unlike encroachment, land grabs involve the active connivance of officials. Such operations involve tampering with old records, insertion of names to create rights, creation of forged documents and making bogus entries in mutation records. Investigations by joint legislature committees, task forces and internal inquiries have repeatedly revealed the role of officers. However, there has not been any real action or accountability. As the system continues to shield the guilty, most cases end in cursory suspensions.

Loopholes have not only allowed illegal land dealings but also spawned a criminal enterprise.

▸ Land grab, Page 2

Killer cough syrups, an ailing system

Recurring tragedies highlight India's drug safety crisis

DINESH THAKUR & PRASHANT REDDY T

India is facing yet another tragedy linked to adulterated cough syrups, exposing the deep flaws in the country's poorly regulated pharmaceutical industry.

According to reports, at least 21 children have lost their lives in Madhya Pradesh, while several others are undergoing treatment for acute kidney injury (AKI). This is

The SUNDAY STORY

the fifth cough syrup-related tragedy involving India-manufactured drugs in the last five years, following incidents in Jammu in 2020, Gambia and Uzbekistan in 2022 and Cameroon in 2023. These four tragedies claimed the lives of around 160 children. There have been nine tragedies involving India-manufactured cough syrups over the decades, the first dating back to 1972.

The cause of death in most of these cases is acute kidney injury. Kidney failure occurs due to the contamination of the cough syrup with diethylene glycol (DEG), a chemical used in anti-freeze and brake fluid. It could be fatal for human beings, especially children, given their body mass. Ideally, there should be no trace of DEG in propylene glycol (PG), an industrial solvent used to dissolve medicines required to make cough syrups. Manufacturers of cough syrups are required to use pharmaceutical grade PG and the law mandates that they test it for DEG contamination before formulating the syrup. However, in India, pharmaceutical manufacturers often skip this step and use untested PG procured from chemical traders.

The only silver lining to this tragedy is the speed and candour of the Tamil Nadu Drugs Control Department (TNDCD), which rapidly inspected the manufacturer's facility in Kancheepuram after receiving a communication from its counterpart in Madhya Pradesh. Such candour marks a refreshing departure from the disgraceful, evasive and jingoistic response of the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) in 2022, after the tragedy in The Gambia drew international attention.

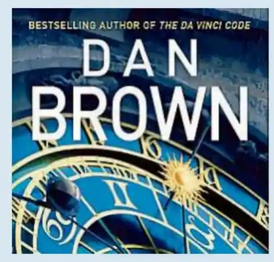
Even more remarkable is that the TNDCD's announcement came only a few hours after the Union Ministry of Health informed a news agency that the cough syrups had not tested positive for DEG.

▸ Cough syrup tragedy, Page 2

Art & Pursuits *Page 18*

Spice and silk roads
At the ongoing Bukhara Biennial, noted artist Subodh Gupta's installation weaves Indian-Uzbek traditions together

Books *Page 15*



Soul decoding in Prague
Dan Brown's latest blends consciousness, myth and history, and despite the clunky prose, he keeps the thrills coming

Food & Drink *Page 16*

Light and citrusy
Gondhoraj is a particularly aromatic variety of lemon that can up the flavour quotient of your meal

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Digitisation to check tampering, forgery

Land grab, from Page 1

This was evident in a series of cases busted by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) starting in 2020, where a group of about 10 persons, including advocates, were accused of grabbing land in over 112 cases. The modus operandi was simple: create fictitious records, file a suit in court with a fake plaintiff and a fake defendant, and secure a compromise decree from the court. The decree was then used to claim ownership of land, including private lands, which were eventually occupied by forcibly evicting the legal owners.

While these cases stand out due to the brazenness of the accused, they remain an aberration compared to the scams involving senior politicians and officials. Land-grab scams cannot occur without the involvement of officials at some level. In fact, the high court order that led to the CID investigation had also directed a probe against officials from the local court where the compromise decree was filed.

"The 5th respondent, the registrar of the court (Court of Small Causes Bengaluru), is directed to institute a police investigation in this serious matter and cause a domestic enquiry against the suspect officials of the court, since fraud, forgery and fabrication ordinarily do not happen without the involvement of insiders," it said.

As forged documents and fraudulent orders by senior officers have put the government on the defensive, the Revenue Department has, for the first time, introduced a standard operating procedure (SOP) that uses forensic tools to detect and check deception during the ongoing digitisation drive under the Bhu-Suraksha Project. Over 100 crore documents across Karnataka will be scanned, verified and uploaded into a secure server to prevent any further tampering.

Encroached lands

While the owners of private land fight to protect their property, government departments wake up years or decades later. Take, for instance, the attempt to grab land belonging to the 9th-century Nageshwara Temple at Begur in Bengaluru, a site whose hero stones and inscriptions have opened a window to the history of the capital city.

The temple authorities, under the Muzrai department, are contesting illegal claims over 25 acres of land in two survey numbers (12 and 17). However, there is no attempt to save the temple land in adjacent survey numbers 13 and 15 because the alleged encroacher is connected to a sitting minister.

Syed Mustafa and other activists of Karnataka Rashtra Samithi, who submitted a petition to the revenue department and temple authorities to save the temple land, have now been made to fight a legal case. They have been named respondents in a civil suit filed by Samiualla K S and Gulab Jan K S seeking to establish claims over the land.

"We are not the owners of the land. It is the government which has to fight to save the urban common. However, we are forced to fight its battle. Samiualla also claims ownership of land in survey number 15. This area also includes 2 acres and 13 guntas of 'B' Kharab land (non-cultivable government land) which cannot be granted. We are essentially fighting the fight of the government because there is absolutely no interest in protecting the commons," said Raghupathi Bhat, general secretary of the party.

Bengaluru Urban Deputy Commissioner G Jagadeesha said he has directed the tahsildar concerned to submit a report on the matter. "As per the preliminary information from field officers, there are some pending court cases. Once I get the report from the tahsildar, we will have clarity on the matter, including the allegations of illegal grant," he said.

Official connivance

Illegal grants, tampering of records, insertion of names into old registers are at the root of the big scams. Such official connivance draws the line that separates encroachment from systematic attempts at land grabbing. Such incidents have been exposed repeatedly, with the Task Force for Recovery of Public Land and its Protection chaired by V Balasubramanian in 2011, flagging a landmark case.

The chairman had ordered an inquiry against the special deputy commissioner, Bengaluru Urban district, who had passed illegal orders in 428 cases within a span of two years, causing a loss of 1,042 acres of government land on the outskirts of Bengaluru. "The Regional Commissioner constituted 18 teams of revenue auditors to examine each of these 428 cases and submitted a report in February 2011 that in none of these cases the original documents were examined and government lands were conferred on the claimants merely on the basis of entries in the RTC forms and mutation entries, etc," Balasubramanian's report said.

In another scam, involving transferable development rights (TDR), limited land availability in the city's centre made fraudsters go vertical. TDR is issued to people as compensation for acquiring their land. In this 2014 case, TDR certificates worth over Rs 27 crore were issued to beneficiaries who never parted with their land.

Tier-2 cities like Mysuru, Hubballi-Dharwad and Mangaluru are also witnessing such cases, thanks to the realty boom in the last 20 years. In the now-famous Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam, the one-man commission gave a clean chit to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah but pointed out several issues in the decisions taken by the MUDA authorities, including the development and allotment of denotified land.

Hubballi-Dharwad Urban Development Authority (HDUDA) chairman Shakir Sanadi said at least eight parcels of land allotted by the authority were protected from such scams recently. "Land without legal heirs, sites with owners staying abroad, land parcels purchased when Aadhaar linking and digitisation were not there and those without proper documents are prone to such frauds. Land grabbers identify such sites and try to sell them," he said.

Political economy

The administration often comes down hard on the poor who use land for housing or cultivation. The exceptions are the encroachers who become part of the political economy, as seen in the Bagair Hukum cases. The revenue department is well aware of such attempts.

In August 2023, the department took an unprecedented step and sent a 13-member team to Kadur and Mudigere taluks of Chikkamagaluru district to look into illegal allotments.

In Kadur, the team probed 3,685 mutation entries related to grants and found problems in 2,243 (60%) cases involving a total of 5,238 acres of land.

A confidential report by the team not only named officials (village accountants to tahsildars) responsible for the irregularities, but also listed the irregularities directly attributed to the Bagair Hukum Committee led at various periods of time by Y S V Datta, B L Prakash, Belli Prakash and C T Ravi. They were held responsible for 252 cases (719 acres), 141 cases (271 acres), 139 cases (251 acres) and 32 (80 acres), respectively.

In Mudigere, the team looked into 2,105 cases, of which they found problems in 1,961 cases involving 5,360 acres. The Bagair Hukum committee headed at various periods by M P Kumarswamy, Motamma and B B Ningaiah was held responsible for an illegal allotment of 483 acres. As many as 15 tahsildars were named for the illegal allotment in over 3,000 acres.

Digital mapping

Rajender Kumar Kataria, Principal Secretary, Revenue Department acknowledged the challenges and said the root of the problem lies in the lack of proper documentation, which has put the department on the defensive and often in a disadvantageous position.

"That realisation was a key instrument in conceiving the government's Bhu-Suraksha project. This is not mere digitisation of over 100 crore pages of records. We have geo-fenced government lands and introduced a beat system where field officers periodically check government land parcels," he said.

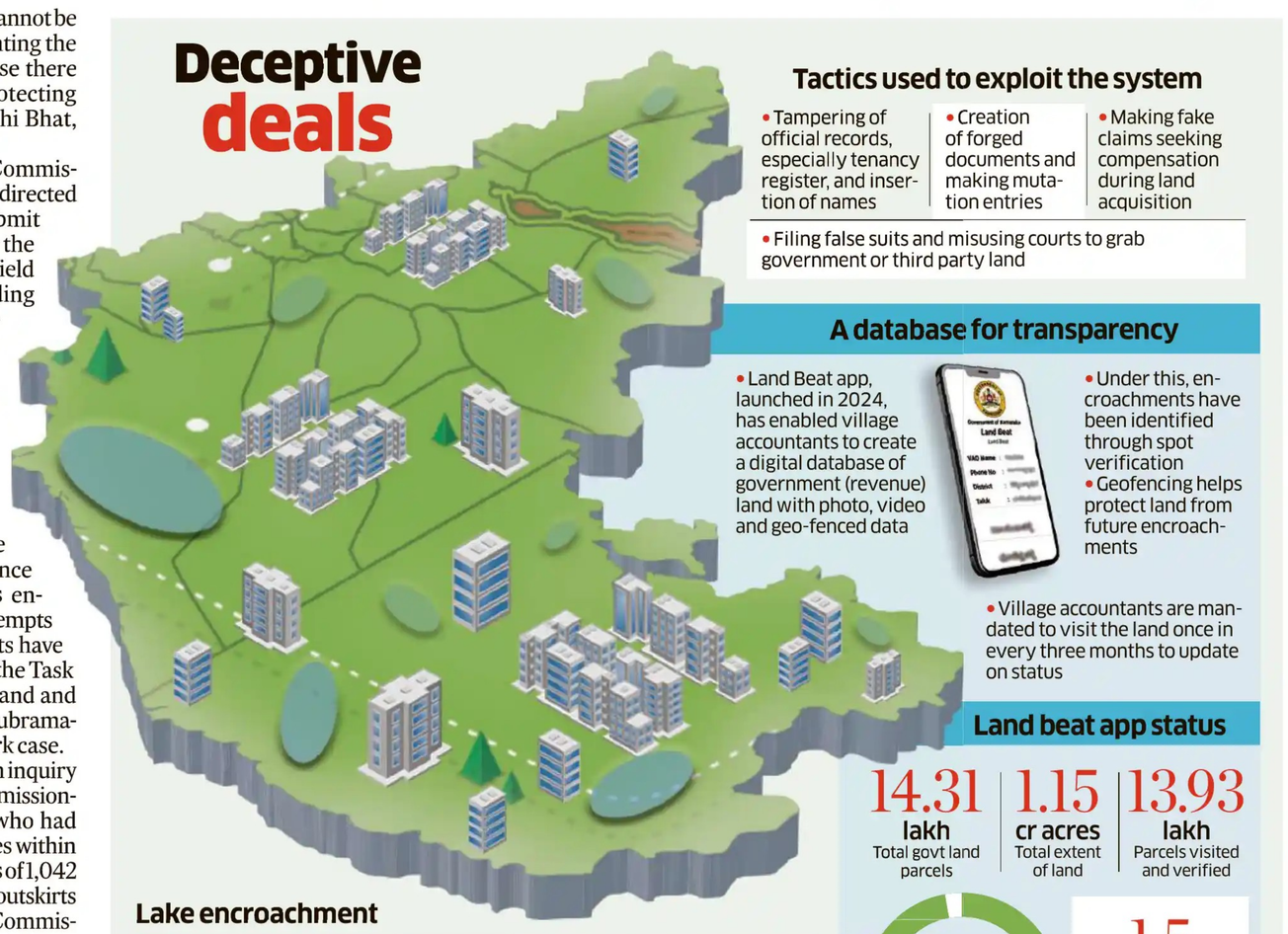
Scanning, indexing and cataloguing may seem like dry work, but with soaring land prices, a box of old documents could be worth over Rs 50 crore. Hence the scanning and verification process is done under the surveillance of closed-circuit (CCTV) cameras. Through digitisation, the department hopes to check tampering and forgery, the two biggest threats.

What happens when the existing records are already flagged? The department has developed a detailed SOP with forensic procedures. It starts with visual assessment of the paper type, state logo, official seals, typewriter and type face, pen type and ink mismatch among others. Forensic examination under ultraviolet light, use of specialised software and checks on digital documents for forgery are among the methods suggested for further analysis.

A senior official said while digitisation cannot completely stop irregularities, the digital trail will serve as a deterrent. "Grabbing government land has become tougher now compared to a decade ago. However, no step is foolproof. Someone who is conniving will factor in the cost involved in such malpractice. Also, they know they can get away with the help of politicians or legal procedures," he said, adding that speedy conviction of fraudulent officials remains the best deterrent.

With regard to accountability, Kataria said a total of 269 disciplinary cases have been taken against revenue authorities — from village accountants to assistant commissioners.

"We are also planning a separate portal to track cases against officials. Sometimes, a show cause notice is issued to an officer and then the system forgets it. The portal will ensure time-bound action so that every case reaches its logical conclusion," he said.


Deceptive deals
Tactics used to exploit the system
• Tampering of official records, especially tenancy register, and insertion of names
• Creation of forged documents and making mutation entries
• Making fake claims seeking compensation during land acquisition
• Filing false suits and misusing courts to grab government or third party land
A database for transparency
• Land Beat app, launched in 2024, has enabled village accountants to create a digital database of government (revenue) land with photo, video and geo-fenced data
• Under this, encroachments have been identified through spot verification
• Geofencing helps protect land from future encroachments
• Village accountants are mandated to visit the land once in every three months to update on status
Land beat app status
14.31 lakh Total govt land parcels
1.15 cr acres Total extent of land
13.93 lakh Parcels visited and verified
97.31% Govt land tracked
1.5 lakh* Govt land parcels encroached including Bagair Hukum lands
*Extent of encroachment varies

Lake encroachment

District	No. of lakes	Total extent (in acres)	No. of lakes encroached	Extent of encroachment (in acres)
Bengaluru	**837**	27,726	730	**4,229**
Bengaluru Rural	**710**	30,032	643	**6,252**
Ramanagar	**1,475**	22,383	841	**1,174**
Tumakuru	**2,047**	1.15 lakh	1,010	**3,502**
Mysuru	**2,991**	25,148	1,449	**1,472**
Chikkaballapur	**1,533**	49,469	415	**2,506**
Shivamogga	**4,792**	34,712	1,848	**3,527**
Hassan	**6,861**	62,847	2,322	**2,396**
Kolar	**3232**	75,196	1,180	**8,529**
Mandya	**962**	33,469	448	**1,765**
Chikkamagaluru	**1,810**	20,126	808	**1,302**

One third of Karnataka's lakes encroached

41,849 Total lakes
7.8 lakh acres Total area of lakes
14,269 Total lakes encroached
43,278 acres Total extent of encroachment

BAGAIR HUKUM LOOPHOLES

• **Bagair Hukum** is a parcel of land cultivated or occupied by farmers without legal ownership or permission from the government
• As per the Bagair Hukum (regularisation) scheme, farmers holding less than **two hectare** prior to 2005 were allowed to apply for regularisation of land
• But the land regularisation scheme has been dogged by a lack of accountability
• Integration between records, registration and survey is lacking
• Data with land grant decision-making committee members is inadequate
• Manipulations and tampering of records is also rampant
• In many cases, genuine eligible land holders are harassed and grants are being delayed

THE DIGITAL ERA

• To ensure transparency and protect land records, the State Revenue Department launched the **Bhu-Suraksha Project** in 2024
• Under this, land records are being digitised, making them tamper-proof, ensuring data security and easy retrieval
• Until now, **44.8 crore** pages have been uploaded
• **Aadhaar seeding** is the backbone of the new streamlined Bagair Hukum regime

Source: Revenue Dept, media reports, Population Fund, Evidence NGO

Compiled by **Divyashri Mudakavi, Chiranjeevi Kulkarni, Naveen Menezes**

DH Graphic: **Guru Prasath R**

Recent changes to Bhu-Suraksha

• **Digital order in revenue courts:** Orders are typed and generated through Revenue Court Case Monitoring System with digital signatures, ending manual intervention
• **Data at village level:** Village accountants will have data regarding litigations in their jurisdictions, allowing access at local level. They can download and issue notice to parties
• **Instant alerts:** SMS, emails are sent to parties at every stage to update on cases, including hearing date, schedule and orders. SMS with link to order copy is sent
• **Tracking pendency:** When a case is delayed for 90 days, govt officers of all levels appointed as presiding officers get SMS. Soon automatic notice for delayed disposal will be introduced
• **Special courts:** Places with high case load have been given special officers to clear pendency. 20 special assistant commissioners and 10 special deputy commissioners have been appointed

Bengaluru lakes dying, one committee at a time

NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

When Justice N K Patil submitted his committee's report on Bengaluru's lakes in 2011, he had warned with almost prophetic clarity: "A stitch in time saves nine."

The report, commissioned by the Karnataka High Court, came out when the scramble for land was at its peak, amidst Bengaluru's IT boom. It urged the government to prevent the ecological collapse of a city built around its water bodies by surveying lakes, clearing encroachments, fencing their boundaries, and preventing contamination.

Fourteen years later, the warnings lie buried beneath concrete, much like the lakes themselves. Take Chikka Kallasandra Lake in Uttarahalli, for instance. Revenue records mention it as a government kharab (which cannot be used for farming) water body spread over 12 acres and 26 guntas. However, it doesn't appear in the list of 183 lakes maintained by the now-dissolved Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP).

In Whitefield's Pattandur Agrahara, revival efforts of a 13-acre lake, officially recognised as a water body, have been stalled even as private encroachments continue to expand. The A T Ramaswamy report on land grabbing had in 2006 exposed how land grabbers used forged Land Reforms Tribunal documents from 1990 to falsely claim ownership. Though the High Court eventually stayed the transfer of lake land, fresh encroachments have since reappeared.

Over the years, several committees have studied Bengaluru's vanishing lakes, each producing voluminous reports. The A T Ramaswamy Committee exposed how influential individuals grabbed government and lake land by forging documents. The Justice N K Patil Committee proposed a dedicated Lake Protection Cell.

Soon after, the V Balasubramanian Task Force (2011–12) surveyed 842 lakes and found 1,848 acres encroached by 2,488 people, while the 2014 K B Koliwad Committee calculated that over 4,500 acres of lake land in Bengaluru Urban district were under encroachment. In 2018, the Environmental Management and Policy Research Institute (EMPRI) issued a sobering state-wide assessment — nearly 43% of Karnataka's lakes, it said, were polluted or encroached, many "beyond restoration."

Despite these findings, the bulldozers rarely move. As per the BBMP data, still, about 197 acres of lake land in the now-dissolved BBMP limits have been encroached by government agencies themselves, while private encroachments account for another 121 acres. In Bengaluru Urban district, which has 857 lakes, 730 are encroached, covering 4,229 acres. Over the past decade, barely 250 acres have been reclaimed. Across the state, 14,269 of 41,849 lakes are encroached.

Even as some lakes thrive, fenced on all sides, the future does not seem promising. Environmentalists say the rot runs deeper as many legislators have direct or indirect interests in real estate. Chances of clearing encroachment is high when there is no political interest.

V Ram Prasad, convener of Friends of Lakes, said the government's recent proposal to reduce buffer zones around lakes and stormwater drains will be the final nail in the coffin. "This will only increase flooding, deplete the groundwater table, and erase the little green space left," he said.

Have your say

To express your opinion, e-mail us at: insight@deccanherald.co.in

Cough syrup tragedy, from Page 1

Nationwide recall system for unsafe drugs still absent

It is a mystery as to how the Union Health Ministry made such a determination because it is now confirmed that Tamil Nadu knew on October 2 and Madhya Pradesh on October 3, that the cough syrup failed testing. It is unlikely that any bureaucrat will be held accountable for this brazen attempt to mislead the nation. Unfortunately, such grave incompetence has been a signature feature of the Union Health Ministry's response to tragedies involving adulterated cough syrups.

Even in the past, the bureaucracy has managed to escape scrutiny. For example, in December 2021, three children died and several others fell ill in a Delhi hospital after consuming a cough syrup. The Aam Aadmi Party government announced an inquiry but the final report was never made public. Repeated attempts to secure a copy of the report under the RTI Act failed due to a vicious circle of transfers by a bureaucracy acting in bad faith. As a result, we still do not know whether the cough syrup was responsible for those deaths.

Effective recall

Now that it is confirmed that these cough syrups are contaminated with DEG, the immediate first step should be aimed at preventing any further deaths by conducting an effective public recall.

As of today, India does not have a binding legal framework to conduct nationwide recalls of adulterated drugs. The issue of recalls has been discussed in numerous government committees since 1976 without any success. With drug regulation in India spread across 37 regulators, one for each state and union territory, plus the national regulator, the issue of coordination and accountability becomes crucial during a public health emergency. Given this fact, a national recall should be the responsibility of a national drug regulator who has the legal powers to operate across the country to conduct the required seizures of the adulterated stock.

Apart from identifying a central authority responsible for conducting recalls, the second component of a recall framework should aim at laying down a standard operating procedure outlining the scope of such recalls. For instance, after the tragedy in Jammu in 2020, it was the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, not the state drug controller, which alerted the public to the brand name of the cough syrup. A few months later another brand of cough syrup manufactured by the same company caused the deaths of two more children. Once again, we know of this only because PGIMER disclosed the details. These deaths could have been avoided had the state drug controller of Himachal Pradesh withdrawn all brands of cough syrup manufactured by the same facility from the market.

Tamil Nadu health officials stick a notice outside the Sresan Pharmaceutical factory that manufactured the Coldrif cough syrup. REUTERS

The logical extension of this argument is to also recall cough syrups manufactured by other companies who used the same batch of contaminated industrial solvent. This is an issue often ignored in India. Not once have we heard of drug regulators in the country tracing the source of the contaminated solvent and mapping out all possible recipients of the same. This is necessary to contain and limit further deaths among those who may have consumed cough syrups or other formulations produced using the same contaminated solvent, even though sold under different brand names.

The third component of any effective recall framework is a clear communication strategy to inform all stakeholders, especially patients and doctors, on the nature of the threat, precautions to be taken and a helpline number for those who require treatment after having consumed the contaminated cough syrup. This communication strategy should include press conferences by government doctors, multilingual advertisements in newspapers, and press releases. If the sales records for the contaminated cough syrup are available, all details of the distribution chain including names of distributors and pharmacies should be published in the advertisements.

Separate from these steps, the government should consider putting together a rehabilitation and compensation package for those affected. Many of the children facing kidney failure due to the contaminated cough syrup will possibly require dialysis support for the long term. Their families will go bankrupt unless supported by the government.

Long-term reforms

As for long-term reforms aimed at preventing a recurrence of such tragedies, we are pessimistic that the state will enact any meaningful change. Our pessimism arises from the knowledge of the political economy of the pharmaceutical industry and its stranglehold over political power. The public disclosure of electoral bonds revealed some of the links between national political parties and large pharmaceutical companies.

Far more pervasive, we suspect, are the backroom deals between local politicians and the small and medium pharmaceutical companies that supply to state government procurement programmes and are responsible for most of these cough syrup scandals. Together, the pharmaceutical industry wields such influence that they managed to convince the Ministry of Health to decriminalise some offences related to the manufacture of substandard drugs (the production of adulterated cough syrups can still be prosecuted) as part of the Jan Vishwas Act, 2023 in the immediate aftermath of the tragedies in The Gambia, Uzbekistan and Cameroon.

As winter sets in and the usage of cough syrups skyrockets, many of these tragedies will not even make it to newspapers as it is notoriously difficult to diagnose DEG poisoning. Prudence would dictate that both parents and doctors avoid cough syrups for children as far as possible.

(Dinesh Thakur & Prashant Reddy T are coauthors of The Truth Pill: The Myth of Drug Regulation)

OUTCRY OVER PRESSER

- Press conference addressed by Afghan Foreign Minister on Friday saw participation restricted to male reporters
- Official sources said invites for press conference had been sent out by consulate general of Afghanistan in Mumbai and govt had no role in it
- The Afghan embassy is not under the jurisdiction of the government of India
- Delhi Union of Journalists said govt may have strategic reasons for re-setting ties with the Taliban but the "blatant disregard" of women's rights is "unacceptable"

Outrage as women barred from Afghan FM presser

Opposition lashes out; Centre denies having any role

SHEMIN JOY & ANIRBAN BHAUMIK
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Centre on Saturday said it was the Afghanistan government's decision to exclude women journalists from the country's foreign minister's presser in New Delhi, and that the embassy premises do not come under India's jurisdiction.

The clarification came amid Opposition uproar over the exclusion of women journalists from Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi's press conference, which leaders termed "shocking and unacceptable".

The Opposition also claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was telling Indian women that he is "too weak to stand up for them" when he allowed it to happen.

The press conference addressed by Muttaqi, after his talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, on Friday saw participation restricted to a handful of male reporters.

Official sources, however, said the invites for the press conference had been sent out by the officials of the consulate general of Afghanistan in Mumbai and the government has no role in it. The Afghan embassy is not under the jurisdiction of the government of India, sources added.

Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi during a visit to Darul Uloom Deoband in Saharanpur, UP. PTI

> Mr Modi, when you allow the exclusion of women journalists from a public forum, you are telling every woman in India that you are too weak to stand up for them
>
> **Rahul Gandhi,** Congress leader

> How can the government and S Jaishankar allow such a discriminatory demand and be dictated terms in our own country? This is not diplomacy, it's a surrender of our integrity, and a compromise on India's commitment to equality and press freedom
>
> Kanimozhi, DMK MP

Delhi Union of Journalists (DUJ) said the government may have strategic reasons for re-setting ties with the Taliban regime in Kabul but the "blatant disregard" of women's rights is "unacceptable" and the "deliberate exclusion" of women journalists "seems like tacit consent, if not approval, of the Taliban's blatant discrimination against women".

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said women have the right to equal participation in every space and Modi's silence "in the face of such discrimination exposes the emptiness of your slogans on 'nari shakti' (women power)."

"Mr Modi, when you allow the exclusion of women journalists from a public forum, you are telling every woman in India that you are too weak to stand up for them," he posted on 'X'.

▸ Afghan, Page 7

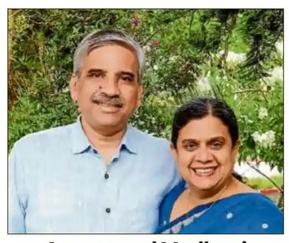
M'luru couple's findings in WHO TB treatment norms

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Research on tuberculosis by a doctor couple from Mangaluru has made a major contribution to the modification of the World Health Organisation guidelines on treating TB, giving significant emphasis on food and nutritional support of the family members of TB patients to prevent new infections.

Two years ago Anurag and Madhavi Bhargava from Kasturba Medical College and Yenepoya Medical College, respectively, published results of an Indian Council of Medical Research-supported trial that for the first time showed how providing food support to household contacts of TB patients reduces the chances of new TB cases by nearly half while food and nutrition support to the TB patients greatly improves their chances of survival.

Earlier this week, when the WHO released its new consolidated guidelines on tuberculosis and undernutrition, it included "provision of food assistance to prevent TB in household contacts of people with TB in food insecure settings" as one of the key new additions.



Anurag and Madhavi Bhargava

"The new recommendation was informed by the findings from the Reducing Activation of Tuberculosis by Improvement of Nutritional Status (RATIONS) trial," the UN body said.

The guideline referred to five TB-related studies carried out by the Bhargava couple in partnership with other researchers.

▸ TB, Page 7

CJI: Specialised statutes needed to guard girl child

Says digital era risks call for training law enforcers

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Chief Justice of India B R Gavai on Saturday favoured the enactment of specialised statutes and training of law enforcers and decision makers, in view of the vulnerability of a girl child in the digital era due to online harassment, cyberbullying and digital stalking as well as the misuse of personal data and deepfake imagery.

CJI B R Gavai

He was speaking at the national annual stakeholders consultation on "Safeguarding the Girl Child: Towards a Safer and Enabling Environment for Her in India", organised under the aegis of the Juvenile Justice Committee (JJC) of the Supreme Court, in association with UNICEF, India.

He said despite constitutional and legal guarantees, many girls continue to be denied their fundamental rights and even basic necessities for survival.

This vulnerability exposes them to disproportionately high risks of sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, malnutrition, sex-selective abortions, trafficking and child marriage against their will, he pointed out.

▸ CJI, Page 7

Remarks on CJI: Social media handles booked

The Cyber Crime police in Bengaluru have registered cases against five social media handles for allegedly posting derogatory remarks against Chief Justice of India (CJI) B R Gavai, a day after a Delhi-based lawyer had attempted to hurl a shoe at him.

Details on Page 6

Medical student 'gang-raped' in Bengal

A medical college student from Odisha was allegedly raped by unidentified men in West Bengal's Paschim Bardhaman district, police said on Saturday. The police began an investigation into the incident that occurred outside the campus in Durgapur on Friday.

Details on Page 9

'Probe on syrup firm exposed TNFDA lapses'

NEW DELHI, PTI: The investigation against the manufacturer of Coldrif cough syrup, linked to the deaths of children in Madhya Pradesh, has brought to light lapses by the Tamil Nadu Food and Drug Administration in enforcing regulatory norms, sources in the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) said.

Licensed in 2011 by the TNFDA, Sresan Pharma continued operations unchecked for over a decade despite its dismal infrastructure and multiple violations of drug safety rules, they said.

Details on Page 8

Speeding BMTC bus runs over 9-year-old girl at Rajajinagar

BENGALURU, DHNS

A nine-year-old schoolgirl, Bhuvana, was killed on Saturday afternoon after being run over by a speeding BMTC bus at the Rajajinagar 1st Block signal. Locals blamed the driver's negligence for the accident which occurred around 12 noon while the girl was reportedly trying to cross the road.

Bhuvana, a Class 4 student at Panchajanya Vidyapeeth School, was returning home after school with her sister and friends when the bus, allegedly speeding through the intersection, hit her.

▸ BMTC, Page 7

BMTC accidents in 2025

- **Sept 3 (KR Puram/ Doddabasti):** A two-wheeler rider, Manikantan (43), crushed between a BMTC bus and a mini truck.
- **Aug 31 (Mahadevapura):** An 80-year-old pedestrian, Shankar Narayana Shastri, fatally knocked down by BMTC e-bus.
- **Aug 24 (KR Market/SJP Road):** An 11-year-old boy, Shabarish fell off a two-wheeler after being hit by a BMTC bus and was run over.
- **Aug 21 (Yelahanka/Kogilu Main Road):** A 10-year-old girl, Tanvi Krishna, run over by BMTC bus after falling off her mother's scooter.

- **Aug 20 (Jayanagar TTMC):** A 64-year-old man Sampangi's hand got stuck in the door of a moving BMTC bus and was run over after he fell down.
- **July 22 (Silk Board):** A 60-year-old pillion rider, Valiyamma, died after being run over by a BMTC bus.
- **Feb 28 (Banashankari 3rd Stage):** An auto driver and his passenger were killed when their vehicle was crushed between two moving BMTC buses.

Bodies of 2 missing soldiers recovered in J&K

SRINAGAR, DHNS: Security forces on Saturday concluded a five-day search operation in the dense Gadole forest area of Kokernag in south Kashmir's Anantnag district after recovering the bodies of two Indian Army soldiers who went missing during a counter-terror operation earlier this week.

The soldiers, Lance Havildar Palash Ghosh and Lance Naik Sujay Ghosh, were part of a paratrooper unit engaged in tracking and neutralising terrorists in the forests. They went missing five days ago, coinciding with a sudden snowstorm.

Details on Page 8

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BUT LONG WAITS LINGER Centres equipped with basic services, adequate staff

PHCs shed 'always sick' tag, turn reliable for the neglected

AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR & ASHWIN B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

Once synonymous with absent doctors, old buildings and medicine shortages, primary health centres (PHCs) and urban primary health centres (UPHCs) in Bengaluru are slowly emerging as formidable sentinels of public healthcare.

Though there is a shortage of vaccines related to dog bites, a reality check at about 10 PHCs and UPHCs by *DH* recently found that basic amenities in place at these centres.

Each of the centres was found to be adequately staffed with about 10 to 15 personnel, including a doctor, staff nurses, ASHA workers, health inspectors, pharmacists, lab technicians and cleaners.

Electricity and water connections were in place and most of the centres were found to have wheelchair ramps.

A very crowded PHC at Bangarappa Nagar. Public health centres give succour to the underprivileged classes as they cannot afford to pay for services at private facilities. DH PHOTO/AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR

Services available

PHCs dispense free treatment for seasonal diseases like malaria and non-communicable diseases such as blood pressure and diabetes, pregnant women care, postpartum care, newborn care, immunization for children, menstrual health care, family planning counselling and dental care.

Diagnostic facilities offered are blood tests and urine tests. Treatment is also offered for unwanted pregnancies till nine weeks of pregnancy.

The UPHC at Subhedarapalya in Malleswaram is equipped with an X-Ray room, dental clinic, ophthalmologist and physiotherapist.

Shortage of vaccines

But, personnel at several centres said shortage of vaccines administered for dog bites was acute.

A medical officer at Bangarappa Nagara PHC said, "We have been seeing three-four dog bite cases every week in the past few months. But we do not have a supply of vaccines. So, we are sending patients back".

"A rabies vaccine costs about Rs 450 per dose and depending on the bite, victims should be given five to eight doses. Patients coming to us cannot afford to go to private hospitals," she said.

A medical officer at Lingarajapuram UPHC told *DH*, "We do receive more dog bite cases, and we provide vaccines. If there's a shortage of any major medicine, we contact nearby PHCs and pool it from wherever it is available."

Health and Family Welfare Services commissioner K B Sivakumar told *DH* that the shortage of dog bite vaccines was only in PHCs coming under Greater Bengaluru Authority and not under his department.

Drug procurement

Medical officers upload requirements of medicines through an online portal and the department sends all needed drugs by the fifth of every month.

However, when there is a shortage or immediate necessity of drugs, medical officers procure them from outside or other PHCs.

A few staffers at PHCs complained that they had not received the money they had spent on medicines and the transportation charges.

To this, Sivakumar said the money paid for the outsourced medicines would be reimbursed without fail and there could be a problem only if they had made mistakes while uploading receipts.

"Recently, across the state, we cleared bills of about Rs 20 crore towards drug procurements," he added.

Several medical officers said tuberculosis (TB) accounted for a significant number of cases they see.

A medical officer at Yarabnagar, Banashankari, said, "Especially in this area, houses are not only small, but built chock-a-block. Therefore, TB spreads fast. We are equipped with necessary medicines to treat TB cases and the government provides Rs 700 per patient as nutritious meal allowance".

Doctors are trained to guide women about unwanted pregnancies. Doctors prescribe tablets for women who choose for abortion before nine weeks of pregnancy in case of complications.

"We educate women about the use of contraceptives to protect their health," said a staff member.

While many people expressed satisfaction about the overall upkeep of health centres, they said long waiting hours and facilities closing at 4 pm were a concern.

"We cannot afford private healthcare and we come here," said a patient at Jeevanahalli PHC.

Haseena Bhanu, another patient at Yarabnagar PHC, said, "For pregnant women, it is harder to wait for long hours. More staff should be deputed here".

New tenders called: Minister

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao told DH, "When there is a shortage of drugs, PHCs can procure through Ayushman Bharat-Arogya Karnataka funds allocated to each centre".

He said tenders had been called to procure vaccines for dog bite cases in all government hospitals and the jabs would be available from next month.

Lalbagh walkers pour out city woes to DKS

Traffic congestion single biggest concern

ASHWIN B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar's initiative, "Walk with Bengaluru Citizens," launched with a stroll through Lalbagh Botanical Garden on Saturday, resonated deeply with citizens.

Visibly excited, people were seizing the rare opportunity to present the city's myriad problems directly to the deputy chief minister.

The DyCM walked the park's major trails while he took a quick fruit bite at Hopcoms and visited the Lalbagh lake. He interacted with over 100 to 150 citizens. Many expressed surprise, seeing Shivakumar "casually walking with the public," a big departure from the usual high security personnel around him.

DyCM comfortably sat on a stone bench at the park, paused his formal proceedings, and applauded a young woman walker's spontaneous rendition of the devotional Kannada song, "Guruvige Tanuvannu."

From Mavalli, a local resident, R Vijaya, pointed to the immediate and unhygienic crisis of road encroachment and non-existent drains, resulting in "drainage water and garbage overflowing on the road."

Traffic emerged as the single biggest concern. A frustrated citizen argued that 50% of traffic problems are due to a complete lack of lane discipline and suggested that allowing school buses inside school premises for parking. The upcoming festival season added urgency to the matter, with citizens demanding more officers for traffic management at major bottlenecks like Avenue Road, Chikkapete Circle, BVK Iyengar Road, and Mamulpete.

Another citizen proposed using a helicopter for traffic surveillance and management, and even introducing air taxis to mitigate congestion. Meanwhile, daily walkers at Lalbagh, including Murali Ramaiyengar,, a citizen, voiced serious safety fears over the reported presence of 270 stray dogs inside Lalbagh and increasing dog bite incidents.

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar interacts with the public at Lalbagh on Saturday. DH PHOTO/ASHWIN B M

Man steals jewels worth Rs 47 lakh, gives to girlfriend

BENGALURU, DHNS: Hebbagodi police have arrested a man who allegedly stole jewellery worth Rs 47 lakh and gave part of it to his girlfriend, police said on Saturday. The arrested is Shreyas, 27.

According to the police, on September 14, when the complainant was away, the suspect had broken into the house and fled with the stolen valuables. Following investigations, Shreyas was arrested at his house in Gattihalli.

During the interrogation, the suspect confessed that he had pawned the gold and kept the cash at a finance company and a bank and gave part of it to his girlfriend in Bannerghatta.

The police subsequently recovered 416 grams of jewellery and Rs 3.46 lakh cash. The suspect has been remanded in judicial custody.

"The suspect was related to the aged victim and then misguided her by telling her to approach the police. He also created false CCTV evidence and pre-planned it to mislead the police," a senior police officer said.

An autorickshaw was damaged in a serial accident involving a BMTC bus and several vehicles near Chinnaswamy Stadium on Saturday. DH PHOTO/ KISHOR KUMAR BOLAR

BMTC bus driver suffers seizure, causes serial accident

BENGALURU, DHNS: A BMTC bus triggered a series of accidents near Gate No 9 of Chinnaswamy Stadium on Saturday between 11.45 am and 11.50 am.

Lokesh, 25, the driver of the bus plying between Kempegowda International Airport and Banashankari, lost control of the vehicle following a bout of seizures. The bus collided with nine other vehicles that were in front of it.

In the accident, five cars, three autos, and one bike were hit by the bus. Two people sustained minor injuries.

A case has been registered at the Cubbon Park traffic police station, and the bus has been seized. The driver is being questioned, the traffic police said. An officer, investigating the case, told *DH* that the accident did not trigger a traffic jam in the vicinity. "The vehicles were cleared out immediately," he added.

Don't buy crackers from unlicensed vendors: Top cop

MANJUNATH SHETTAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

As Deepavali draws closer, more and more voices advocating for celebrating the festival in an eco-friendly manner continue to grow. Bengaluru City Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh sounded a note of caution when he advised people to purchase only green crackers from authorised sellers at designated spots.

The city top cop warned people against buying crackers from unlicensed street vendors not only because it was illegal but also because of the risk of such crackers causing accidents.

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has identified 87 grounds for setting up cracker stores, and a list of the same has been submitted to the Fire Department for a No-Objection Certificate (NOC). After evaluating all the places on the list, the department has concluded that these locations can accommodate up to 411 stalls, depending on factors such as accessibility for fire tenders in case of an emergency, said Kuldeep Kumar Jain, Joint Commissioner of Police (Administration).

A large number of applications were submitted seeking a licence for setting up temporary firecracker stalls. Licence will be issued through a lottery system. Those selected will have to pay a fee of Rs 5,000, and Rs 25,000 for the stall.

Licenced vendors can sell crackers between October 18 and 22. They will have to strictly adhere to norms laid down by the Fire Department and the pollution board, Jain said.

"If we find any violations, vendors will be booked under the provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)," he added.

Sale timings

The sale of crackers will begin at 6 am and go on till 10 pm. The size of each stall is 10x10 sq feet and the distance between two stalls should be 3 feet. It will not be permitted for traders or their staff to remain in the stalls overnight. This year, the fee for the NOC has been increased from Rs 5,000 to Rs 6,400.

7 held for posing as officials, robbing professor of Rs 1.5 crore

BENGALURU, DHNS: A gang of seven people was arrested by the Yelahanka police for allegedly posing as government officials and robbing a city-based professor of over Rs 1.50 crore, officials said on Saturday.

The arrested are Shankarappa, Rajendra Jain, Hemanth Jain, Srinivas Gowda, Jagan Mohan, Srinivas and Kiran Jain.

Investigations revealed that Shankarappa, who had worked as a driver previously with the victim, Giriraj Kumar, had planned the robbery after he became aware of the huge cash.

The victim had a large amount following the completion of a real-estate transaction, officials said. Shankarappa then informed his associates, many of whom were in the real estate business.

On September 19, four of the suspects, posing as government officials from the "government enforcement wing", forcibly entered the victim's house in Vinayaka Nagar and threatened him, his wife and his mother. Four others stayed outside the house, keeping watch.

The suspects searched the house and fled with the documents and a suitcase containing cash. Kumar told the police that the suspects had fled with Rs 1.50 crore cash and 2.50 lakh worth of gold ornaments.

Police launched the investigation and subsequently arrested the seven suspects. Another one is at large. From the suspects, the police have recovered Rs 1.27 crore in cash. All seven suspects are in judicial custody.

During subsequent raids at the premises of the suspect, the seals, documents, visiting cards were recovered. A separate case will be registered," said Seemant Kumar Singh, Bengaluru city police commissioner.

Man held for inappropriately touching minor girl

BENGALURU, DHNS: Kumbalgodu police have arrested a private firm employee for allegedly inappropriately touching a 10-year-old girl.

The incident occurred on October 1, but the incident came to light on Saturday.

The police have registered an FIR under sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, and arrested the suspect Aryan, 25, a private firm employee.

The police analysed the CCTV footage and arrested the suspect. The girl had informed her mother of the incident that occurred in their apartment under the Kumbalgodu police station limits, and subsequently, the police were informed. Further probe is on.

Floral oasis: Orchid Show 2025 showcases exotic varieties

BENGALURU, DHNS

The city's anthophiles found a beautiful escape this weekend as the Orchid Show 2025, organised by The Orchid Society of Karnataka (TOSK) in collaboration with Indo American Hybrid Seeds, kicked off at St Joseph University on Saturday. Hundreds of orchid enthusiasts gathered on the inaugural day.

The two-day event offers an array of displays, featuring indigenous, exotic, and newly bred hybrid orchids.

Beyond the display, the show includes stalls selling orchids, planting accessories, and literature, along with hands-on training and live demonstrations focused on orchid care and cultivation.

Srinath Rao, who grows dozens of varieties on his rooftop, attested to the suitability of the city's climate.

"It's easy to grow and maintain here in Bengaluru, and the climate is also ideal," Rao said, adding humorously, "Orchids can be grown everywhere, except Antarctica."

Visitors were treated to stunning examples of five of the most popular genres, including the Phalaenopsis (Moth Orchids), Dendrobium, Oncidium, Cattleya, and the Vanda.

For many, the show was a much-needed break from the city's hustle and bustle. "After battling traffic, it's relaxing and improves our mood to look at these beautiful flowers," said a visitor.

Another buyer, who bought over 13 varieties, pointed to the plant's resilience as a key factor.

They are easy maintenance— no direct sunlight, and weekly watering is enough. They are the best plants given Bengaluru's water crisis."

Dr Poornima, along with fellow Nagarbhavi residents Rekha and Malathi, praised the "awesome collection" but called for more regularity.

"The show is conducted every two years. It should be held every year," they urged.

Visitors admire the orchids displayed at the Orchid Show 2025, organised by The Orchid Society of Karnataka and Indo American Hybrid Seeds, at St Joseph University in Bengaluru on Saturday. DH PHOTO/B K JANARDHAN

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

'Sanskritsova-2025' Pratibha Puraskar and Sanskrit Sevavrathi Award Presentation: Presence: Basavaramananda Swami, Award Recipient: Vanitha Ramaswamy; Samyaka Pratishanam: Jawahar Balabhavan, Cubbon Park, 9 am

Women Bikethon Awareness on 'Breast Cancer': HCG Cancer Centre, K R Road; 7 am

Eighth Anniversary, 'Malenadu Ratna' Award Presentation: Vinay Guruji, DK Shivakumar to inaugurate; Ajith D Kalkuli, Award Recipients: Aarti Krishna, Vijaydev Basavani, Vishwanath Gaddemane, 'Shivadoot Guliga' Program: Malenadu Hitarakshan Vedike; Dr Rajkumar Auditorium, Friends Club, Mahalakshmapura, 4 pm

23rd Music Festival, Award Presentation: Inauguration: Padmini Acchi, Manu Baligar Triveni Harish, Giridhar Bhandivada to be present, Srijayaram Seva Mandali, Jayanagar, 3.30 pm

CULTURAL

Hindustani Music Concert: Vocals: Ambayya Nuli; Band Stand, Cubbon Park; 7 am

Indian Music Festival: Bhagavata Sankirtana, AN Yellappa Reddy, Suma Sudhindra to present; Dr H N Multimedia Hall, National College, Basavanagudi; 8 am

National Music and Dance Festival: Inauguration: Shivaraj Tangadgi; 'Kaviya Nodi Kavithe Keli' Nagathihalli Chandrashekhar, Na Damodar Shetty, Y K Muddukrishna to be present; Department of Kannada and Culture; Ravindra Kalakshetra, JC Road, 10 am

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Generally cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain and thundershowers

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	28.6°C
Minimum	20.0°C
Rainfall	--
Humidity	95%
Sunset (date)	6:38 pm
Sunrise (Next day)	6:08 am
Moonrise	4:29 am
Moonset	5:30 pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

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MARUTI SUZUKI

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CM slams BJP legislators' absence at GBA meeting

BENGALURU, DHNS: Expressing his disappointment with the BJP legislators' truancy at the first meeting of the newly-formed Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), Chief Minister Siddaramaiah opined that they were opposed to the capital city's development.

Siddaramaiah

"If BJP representatives are concerned about Bengaluru's development, they should not have been absent at the GBA meeting. GBA is a democratic forum. Their absence shows that they are against decentralisation of the city's administration," said Siddaramaiah.

Reminding the BJP that decentralising the city's administration was an idea the saffron party had initially floated, the CM added, "Citing the growth of the city beyond its borders, and stressing the need for good administration, it was the BJP that first proposed decentralisation, but the party is now opposed to it."

Can Greater B'luru Act bring in transparency?: Experts debate

Focus on planning & mobility, governance, transparency

BENGALURU, DHNS

The city's urban evangelists congregated at a dialogue series, held in the city on Saturday, hoping to expand the civic space through informed, constructive conversations connecting policy, practice, and public discourse.

The inaugural session, held at Bangalore International Centre in collaboration with Janaagraha, brought together leaders across the political spectrum to discuss and debate what really the Greater Bengaluru Governance (GBG) Act, India's first metropolitan governance framework, can deliver for citizens. The discussion focused on four key areas: Planning and mobility, citizen-centric governance, transparency, and ward committees.

In a session titled, 'The Bengaluru Debates', panellists included Tejasvi Surya (MP, Bangalore South), Rizwan Arshad (MLA, Shivajinagar and Chair of the Joint Select Committee on GBG Bill 2024), Ravichandar (Member, Brand Bengaluru Committee), and V R Vachana (Associate Director–Policy, Janaagraha). The session was moderated by Srikanth Viswanathan, CEO, Janaagraha.

The session took off on a high note with Tejasvi Surya arguing that the GBG Act centralises power and fails to empower mayors, calling it an unnecessary bureaucratic layer. Arshad countered the argument stating that the GBA Act aims to decentralise, integrate and coordinate multiple agencies such as BMRCL, BWSSB, BESCOM, and BMTC. He highlighted the new requirement for monthly coordination meetings to prevent overlapping work, like road relaying and pipeline digging.

Ravichandar (member, Brand Bengaluru committee), Rizwan Arshad (MLA, Shivajinagar and chair of the joint select committee on GBG Bill 2024), Tejasvi Surya (MP, Bangalore South), and V R Vachana (associate director–policy, Janaagraha) take part in a panel discussion moderated by Srikanth Viswanathan, CEO of Janaagraha, in Bengaluru on Saturday. DH PHOTO

V Ravichandar, involved in drafting the Bill, called the Act a bold experiment in metropolitan governance, stressing that success would depend on implementation and citizens' adherence to the rule of law. He noted that accountability now lies directly with the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister.

Vachana added that while Bengaluru needed a unified body, the new metropolitan committee's jurisdiction remains smaller than that of the BDA.

Surya for better public transport; vows to protect Lalbagh

Surya consistently criticized the Congress's proposed tunnel road project. He argues that rather than focusing on underground tunnels or hanging corridors, priority should be on making public transport more accessible to people.

He calls for greater transparency from the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) regarding their live tracking of buses and expediting the suburban rail project.

Surya has strongly opposed the tunnel project, particularly the section planned to run beneath the Lalbagh Botanical Garden, which he refers to as 'one of the last large green patches in city'.

He challenged Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar's claim that only a small portion of Lalbagh would be affected by the tunnel.

"We will fight against them and make sure they do not touch even an inch of Lalbagh," he declared.

Commission to recommend TN model for kids' digital safety

Experts stress need for quality education at public schools

BENGALURU, DHNS

Citing the Tamil Nadu government's guidelines for protecting children from disturbing and harmful content online, the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KCPCR) has decided to recommend to the government to emulate the neighbouring state's policies to ensure kids' safety in the digital space.

A decision to this effect was taken during a panel discussion on 'Safeguarding Children in Digital Bharat' organised by KCPCR in association with ChildFund, a not-for-profit organisation in Bengaluru.

KCPCR Chairperson K Naganna Gowda said, "The Tamil Nadu government has instructed internet service providers to block harmful content, besides laying down protocol for restricting screen time during online classes. We have decided to recommend implementation of these provisions in Karnataka."

Pointing out that children were becoming targets of cybercrimes, Gowda stressed the need for regulations.

"We have discussed with representatives of IT and gaming companies. Meanwhile, we also need to reduce children's screen time," he added.

The KCPCR chief urged the government to direct private schools to stop uploading everything online.

"We understand it was a necessity during the pandemic, but some schools are still employing online tools, which must be restricted," said Gowda, adding that the commission would also appeal to the state government to strengthen existing cyber laws.

Quality education, infrastructure for outdoor games, and imparting life lessons help wean children off electronic gadgets, experts opined during a discussion on the subject.

"Good infrastructure and quality education at public schools will help solve most problems since it will encourage children to spend quality time at schools," said Gopal Naik from the Centre for Public Policy at the Indian Institute of Management.

Rajat Khajane, Team Leader for Corporate Social Responsibility at Bosch Global Software Technologies, emphasised the need for children to spend time outdoors. "Children must also learn about privacy, and be alert to misinformation. Should they find suspicious activity online, they should be brave and report it," said Khajane.

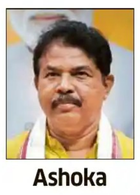
Doctor questions lack of statutory warning

Associate Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at NIMHANS, Dr Rajendra K M, meanwhile, questioned the authorities over the lack of a statutory warning about sexual content.

"Children should be warned against indulging in sexual activities. We see statutory warnings against the consumption of tobacco and alcohol, but why is there no warning for adult content in films and TV shows?" asked the doctor.

Cong using Karnataka as ATM for Bihar poll expenses: Ashoka

BENGALURU, DHNS: Leader of the Opposition in Legislative Assembly R Ashoka on Saturday accused the ruling Congress of 'mobilising' funds for the Bihar elections.


Ashoka

"Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has invited ministers for dinner to raise funds to finance the party for the Bihar elections. Karnataka is the Congress' ATM for Bihar polls. The dinner party is to discuss who can contribute how much for Bihar elections," Ashoka told reporters.

Ashoka even dared the Congress to boycott Bihar elections as they have levelled 'Vote chori' allegations.

Alleging that the law and order in the state has collapsed referring to the recent rape and murder of a nine-year-old girl in Mysuru, Ashoka said,

"While the police are busy visiting ministers and MLAs' residences for transfers and plum postings the crime against women has increased. The heinous crime reported on the Chief Minister's home turf is proof of the deteriorating law and order situation in the state."

Heavy rains leave parts of Southeast B'luru waterlogged

BENGALURU, DHNS: Heavy rains on Friday left several parts of South-East Bengaluru severely waterlogged, disrupting daily life. Areas around Sarjapur and Electronic City, including Rainbow Drive, Balagere, Hosa Road, and Neeladri Nagar, were among the worst hit.

The Rainbow Drive (RBD) Layout was submerged following the breach of Halanayakana Lake. The excess water gushed into the layout, leaving some pockets in knee-deep water and rendering roads unmotorable. Residents were forced to walk or wade through the stagnant water, complaining of slippery conditions and an unbearable stench.

Rainbow Drive Layout on Sarjapur Main Road is inundated by rainwater following heavy rain on Friday night.

Citizens took to X to vent their ire. "How can you call Bengaluru the 'IT Capital of India' when basic drain cleaning and road maintenance are treated like rocket science? Bengaluru deserves better than flooded streets and silent authorities," a user wrote on X.

Despite recent road repairs at Balagere Road to prevent waterlogging, the area flooded again. On Saturday morning, commuters heading into the city were stuck for hours on Sarjapur Road. "My son was stuck for over two hours to cover an eight-kilometre stretch," said Thomas Verghese, a resident.

Another commuter described Muthanallur Cross as a "disaster zone," saying potholes turned into deep, hidden craters after the rain.

Residents have called for immediate civic action, criticizing authorities for recurring flooding despite repeated assurances and infrastructure upgrades.

Society getting state funds cannot claim its staffer not public servant: HC

BENGALURU, DHNS

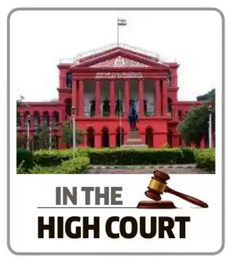
The High Court of Karnataka has directed a co-operative society to consider within a month the Lokayukta police's request to prosecute its secretary in a disproportionate assets (DA) case.

Justice R Nataraj held that the society, which received funds/grants from governments, cannot claim that its employee is not a public servant under the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act.

In 2012, the Lokayukta police had booked Keerthi Kumar, secretary of the Hirekadalur Primary Agricultural Credit Cooperative Society, Hassan taluk. The police investigation covered the check period between August 18, 1998, and December 19, 2012.

The final report stated that Kumar possessed Rs 27.10 lakh in assets, beyond his known sources of income.

The Lokayukta police filed a request with the society under Section 19 of the PC Act, seeking consent to prosecute Kumar. However, on February 6, 2015, the society passed a resolution rejecting the request on the grounds that it is not funded by the government and that Kumar was not a public servant.



The Lokayukta police moved the high court contending that the society has received assistance from the state and union governments from time to time.

Therefore, as an assisted society its employee, the secretary in the case at hand, would fall within the definition of a 'public servant' under Section 2(c) of PC Act, it argued.

The society, however, claimed that it paid the salary from its own funds and that it's not getting any financial assistance or funds from governments.

The court perused the definition of a public servant under the PC Act as well as documents pertaining to funds received by the society, about Rs 13.5 lakh as share amount, rehabilitation fund from the union government. It noted that the society had received separate periodical financial assistance from the state government.

"A perusal of the resolution passed by the respondent No 1 (society) shows that there was no application of mind to the above facts but the respondent No 1 blindly proceeded to hold that it was not funded by the state government and therefore, respondent No 2 (Keerthi Kumar) was not a public servant. In view of the material placed before this court, the impugned resolution passed by the respondent No 1 is faulty and without application of mind and the same is liable to be quashed," Justice Nataraj ruled and directed the society to consider afresh the requisition sent by the Lokayukta police.

SU DO KU X - 3703

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SOLUTION TO 3702

4	8	9	3	2	7	6	1	5
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7	3	6	5	8	2	1	9	4
8	9	2	4	6	1	3	5	7
1	4	5	9	7	3	2	8	6
5	2	1	7	4	8	9	6	3
9	7	8	6	3	5	4	2	1
3	6	4	2	1	9	5	7	8

To solve the puzzle:
The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

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E-Open Tender Notice No.:- S/RWP/E/2025-26/12, dated : 10.10.2025.
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PCMM, Rail Wheel Plant, Bela
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CENTRAL RAILWAY
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The Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer, General, Central Railway, Solapur, for and on behalf of the President of India Invites online e-tenders on Railways e-procurement website **www.ireps.gov.in** from reputed, experienced & Licensed Electrical contractors for the following works. **Tender No. SUR/L/T/2025/19. Name of work:** Repair and Maintenance schedule A, B, C & D check including Escorting of Power cars of GREAVES Make DA set fitted in power cars of LHB trains of Solapur Division for one year. **Estimated cost :** ₹ 2,38,36,132.28/-, **Bid Security:** ₹ 2,69,200/-, **Completion Period:** 12 Months, **Validity of offer:** 60 Days. **Tender No. SUR/L/T/2025/20. Name of work:** Repair and Maintenance schedule A, B, C and D check including Escorting of Power cars of CUMMINS Make DA set fitted in power cars of LHB trains of Solapur Division for one year. **Estimated cost:** ₹ 2,69,12,365.91/-, **Bid Security:** ₹ 2,84,600/-, **Completion Period:** 12 Months, **Validity of offer :** 60 Days, **Date & time of tenders closing on website:** 03/11/2025 at 15.00 hours, Bid Security cost shall be paid through e-payment on **www.ireps.gov.in website.** ANJ-64
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	2025. PWDRB. 4423781	Vidisha	Road	Construction of Vidisha Railway Station Madhav Ganj Chouk Main Road to Pedi School, Chanakya road to Bajariya Jhaki Chouk Via Shivaji Chouk length 2.30 km.	3rd Call	663.82	EMD/All Document are to be submitted online only.
2	2025. PWDRB. 4553841	Bhopal (Mn.Dn. No. 2 Bhopal)	Road	Construction of Balampur Road Length 3.30 km.	1st Call	542.29	EMD/All Document are to be submitted online only.
3	2025. PWDRB. 4553851	Bhopal (Mn. Dn. No. 2 Bhopal)	Road	Construction of Bhopal Vidisha road (Near Dabar House) to Jamuniya via village Balampur (old Bawadi) Road Length 4.90 Km.	1st Call	562.95	EMD/All Document are to be submitted online only.
4	2025. PWDRB. 455387_1	Betul	Road	Constn. of CD on Badi Nadi on Sasabad Andhariya Road, at CH-1300 M., Strengthening of Khapakhateda to Kaajli Road. Length 2.20 Km., Khedi, Sailgaon to Surgaon, Betul Bazar Road. Length 4.60 Km., Mandaibujurg to Boregaon Road. Length 210 Km., Kolgaon to Sailgaon Road. Length 2.00 Km., Strengthening of App. Road of Rest House Under PW.D. Sub Dn. Bhainsdehi. Length 1.68 Km., Constn. of Nayegaon to Rondha Road. Length 2.95 Km, Taikheda to Mirapur Road. Length 2.50 Km., Kukru to Jamukheda Road. Length 140 Km., Mirapur to Chandora Road. Length 3.00 Km., Mohi Underpass to Central School Road Length 0.70 Km.	1st Call	263614	EMD/All Document are to be submitted online only.
5	2025. PWDRB. 4553881	Betul	Road	Constn. of Pipalbarra to Chirotiya Barojpur Road. Length 3.50 Km.	1st Call	50813	EMD/All Document are to be submitted online only.
6	2025. PWDRB. 4553891	Sehore (Budni)	Road	Construction of C.C. Road From Naktitalai to Panguradiya, Mathini, Jahajpura Road Length 10.00 Km.	1st Call	2174.95	EMD/All Document are to be submitted online only.
7	2025. PWDRB. 4553901	Sehore (Budni)	Road	Construction of C.C. Road from Siddhivinayak Ashram, Sudaniya (Shyam nagar) to Pipaliya Road Length 3.30 Km.	1st Call	569.62	EMD/All Document are to be submitted online only.
				Total		7657.90	

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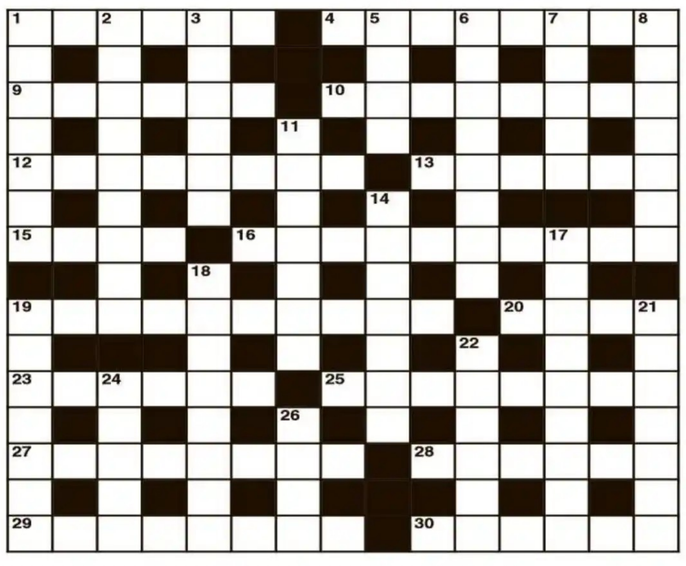
G-19789/25
Sd/- Chief Engineer (Bhopal Zone)
P.W.D. Bhopal Madhya pradesh

◆ SUNDAY CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 2649 ◆



ACROSS
1 Take it in turns (6)
4 Remove people from danger (8)
9 Large non-venomous snake (6)
10 Whenever required (2,6)
12 Bluish violet gemstone (8)
13 Eloquent public speaker (6)
15 Pillage (4)
16 Capsize (4,6)
19 Misleading clue (3,7)
20 Originate (4)
23 Present for consideration (6)
25 Painstaking (8)
27 Surreptitiously (2,3,3)
28 Ingenious (6)
29 Bandage for a wound (8)
30 With a soft touch (6)

DOWN
1 Italian High Renaissance painter (7)
2 On the credit side (2,3,4)
3 Prize of victory (6)
5 Plant bearing grapes (4)
6 Sharply defined (5-3)
7 Be in store for (5)
8 Confirm (7)
11 Wide tidal river mouth (7)
14 Stillness (7)
17 Retaliation (3,3,3)
18 Become over-ambitious (3,5)
19 To answer (7)
21 Inexplicable matter (7)
22 Cite as evidence (6)
24 Take a dip (5)
26 An intended method (4)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 4009

CRYPTIC
ACROSS: 8, Done for 9, Cameo role 13, Allot (a lot) 14, Brick 15, P-inn-ace 16, Car-O-us-e 17, Pu-t-on (rev) 18, Seton (rev) 20, Drive 22, Resume 23, Ro-are-d 25, Has-his-h 27, Co-were-d 30, Swings 31, Spirit 32, Watch 35, Bee-ch 36, S-O-Rt-s 37, General 39, Incense 41, Might 42, Imag(in)e 43, A-r-rest-ing 44, Men-tion.
DOWN: 1, Bowler 2, Rest cure 3, Double-cross 4, Mark's time 5, Respon-D 6, Brings home 7, Fle-a (rev) 10, Ran-c-id 11, Dispose 12, Lea-ned 19, Tor-men-t 21, I-m-a-gin-e 24, Got together 26, High-handed 28, A-part-ment 29, Presage 30, Submit 32, Went into 33, Ha-lte-d 34, Asse-R-ts 38, Reason 40, Care.

EASY
ACROSS: 8, Deliver 9, Muscovite 13, Unite 14, Raise 15, Durable 16, Gutless 17, Light 18, Chant 20, Eaves 22, Resent 23, Morsel 25, Arsenal 27, Passing 30, Twitch 31, Bottle 32, Tacos 35, Aroma 36, Enrol 37, Deadpan 39, Chatted 41, Ewers 42, Evoke 43, Plentiful 44, Feasted.
DOWN: 1, Depict 2, Timeless 3, Terrestrial 4, Aubergine 5, Acidity 6, Avaricious 7, Stub 10, Bungle 11, Aimless 12, Rental 19, Arsenic 21, Vertigo 24, Haberdasher 26, Enchanting 28, Courteous 29, Stalled 30, Trance 32, Traverse 33, Singer 34, Tendril 38, Phoney 40, Able.

State to write to Centre seeking funds for flood-hit districts

Letter to be sent after completion of second joint survey

BENGALURU, DHNS

Heavy showers having left a trail of destruction in North Karnataka, with crops across thousands of hectares being destroyed, besides extensive damage to infrastructure, the state government has decided to seek funds from the Centre for the flood-hit districts.

Sources said that the government was likely to write a letter to the Centre after the conclusion of the second survey. "Once we have evaluated the extent of damage to crops and other infrastructure, we will submit a request for funds to the Centre," a source said.

Unrelenting rain throughout the month of September, coupled with the release of water from reservoirs in Maharashtra left crops across 7.24 lakh hectares in the Bhima River basin districts of Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Bidar and Vijayapura districts. Although a joint survey to assess the extent of damage was undertaken in the affected districts, incessant rains towards the end of September prompted the government to order another survey.

The state government now estimates that crops across 12.54 lakh hectares have been damaged. In accordance with the guidelines of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), a letter will be drafted and sent to the central government seeking funds for relief operations in the third week of October. Meanwhile, there are concerns of the issue turning into a political slugfest between the state and central governments.

In 2023, when 216 taluks were declared drought-hit, Karnataka sought Rs 18,171 crore from the Centre to address problems in the affected areas. But delay in the disbursal of funds prompted the state to send a delegation to the Centre but to no avail. Subsequently, the state government filed a petition in the Supreme Court.

Flood loss

(Numbers in Ha)

District	Area affected (1st survey)	Area affected (2nd survey)	Total
Kalaburagi	1,05,967	1,91,875	2,97,842
Vijayapura	22,268	2,23,566	2,45,834
Bidar	79,887	86,186	1,66,073
Yadgir	0	1,18,186	1,18,186
Dharwad	93,397	4,133	97,630

Roads, houses, bridges wrecked

- **651** houses completely damaged; 9,087 partially damaged
- **683km** of state highway roads and 1,383km of district roads damaged
- **5,558** rural roads and 656 bridges
- **1,877** school buildings and 160 PHCs

1,018 anganwadis | **25,279** electricity poles | **819** transformers | **31** minor irrigation tanks

Kidnap case cracked in 12 hrs; five arrested

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Subramanyapura police have arrested a man and four of his associates on the charge kidnapping and forcing a 19-year-old girl to marry him. The police successfully conducted the rescue operation within 12 hours of the offence being reported.

According to the police, on October 8, at around 5.15 pm, the prime suspect, Ranganath alias Ranga, 23, along with his associates, forcibly entered the victim's house in Simhadri Layout, Chikkalasandra, with weapons. The victim and her mother were having tea.

The suspects grabbed the 19-year-old girl and began dragging her out.

When her mother, a house help, and her grandmother tried to intervene, the suspects swung the machetes at them, scaring them and slightly injuring them. The suspects then fled the spot in an autorickshaw and a two-wheeler.

Shortly, a complaint was filed by the Subramanyapura police. Two teams of investigators were immediately formed. "Different modes of investigation, including CCTV analysis and other technical investigations, led us to trace the suspects within 12 hours," a police investigator told *DH*.

All five suspects confessed to the crime, and the victim was rescued unharmed. Investigations revealed that the prime suspect, Ranganath, was a mechanic and was previously jailed in a murder case. After his release, he began pestering the girl, who was staying near his house, to marry her. A month ago, he had allegedly created a ruckus outside the girl's house twice, asking her to marry him.

Police have booked Ranganath and his associates Rajesh B (26), Chandan (23), Shreyas (30) and Manjunath (20) under BNS Sections 78 (stalking), 87 (kidnapping, abducting or inducing woman to compel her marriage), 118(1) (voluntarily causing hurt or grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means), 189(2) (unlawful assembly), 329(4) (criminal trespass and house trespass) and 351(2) (criminal intimidation). All suspects have been remanded in judicial custody, the police said.

Farmer killed, brother injured in leopard attack

RATTIHALLI (HAVERI DIST), DHNS: A 32-year-old farmer died while his elder brother sustained severe injuries in a leopard attack at Kanavishiddagere in the taluk on Friday night.

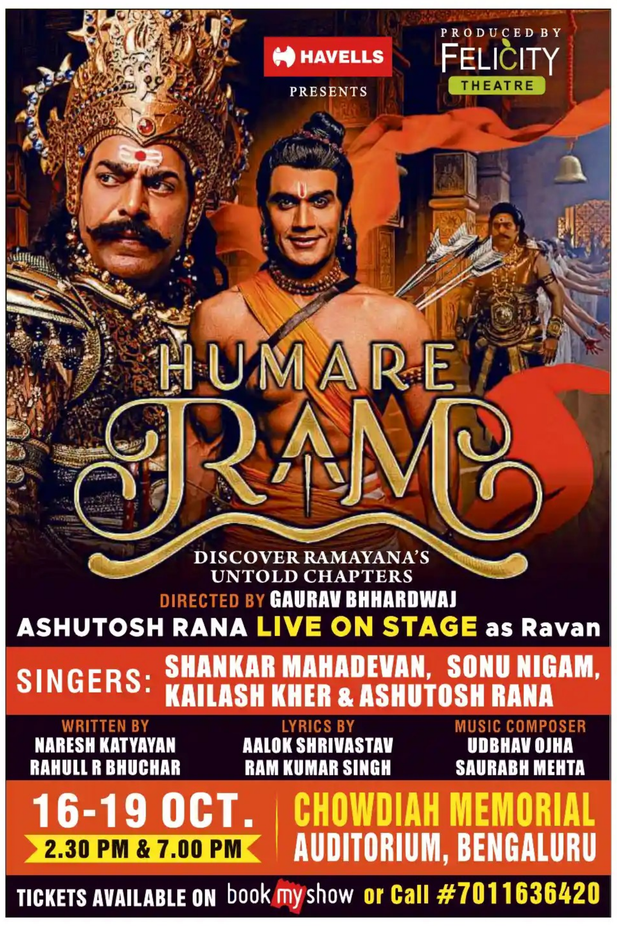
The deceased is Beerappa Hanumanthappa Balagavi. His elder brother Ganesh Hanumanthappa was severely injured and is under treatment at district hospital in Haveri. The leopard pounced on the brothers when they were irrigating maize in their land.

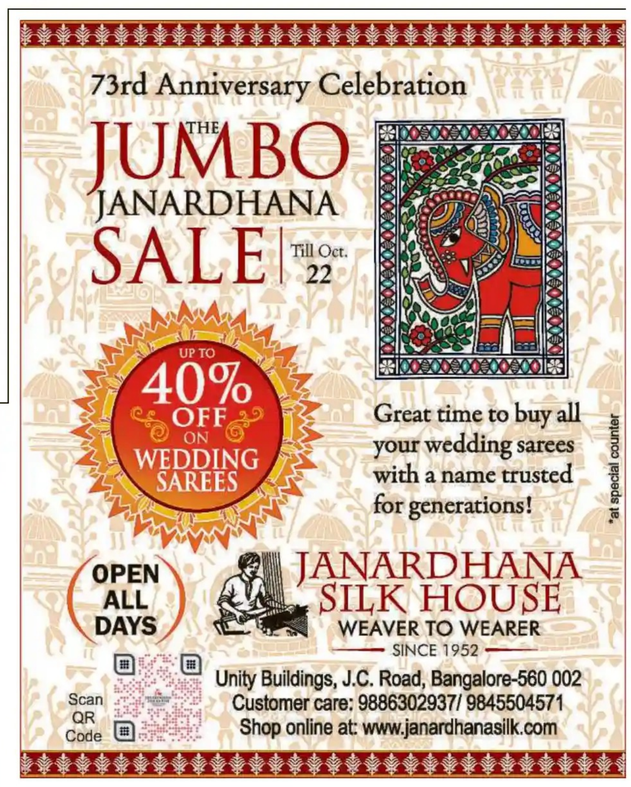
MLA U B Banakar met the family of the deceased and handed over a cheque for Rs 10 lakh towards ex gratia of the forest department. He promised another Rs 10 lakh from the government.

Residents said a leopard had been straying into the village for the past two months and the department was negligent in taking action despite a complaint.

Health dept to appoint 3,691 staff for '108' ambulance service

BENGALURU, DHNS: In an attempt to bring the 108 ambulance services under one umbrella and improve the services of 104 helpline command and control centres, the Health and Family Welfare Department has decided to appoint 3,691 employees.

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₹ 56.64 - 82.18 Lakhs*
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PRM/KA/RERA/1251/308/PR/160824/006972
ELECTRONIC CITY
10 MINS. HOSA ROAD METRO STN.
₹ 67.92 L - 1.34 Cr*
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PRM/KA/RERA/1251/308/PR/290122/004660
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CREDAI BENGALURU

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that my client intends to purchase industrially converted land bearing Survey No. 40/3, Old Survey No.40, vide MR No.T13/2022-23, Khatha No.43, measuring an extent of 30.12 guntas situated at Bellahalli Village, Yelahanka Hoblli, Bengaluru North Taluk, Bengaluru from Sri. P.E. Mathew S/o Late Mr. P.E. Easow aged about 70 years who claims to be the sole and absolute owner of the said property which are morefully described in the Schedule herunder.

It is hereby notified to the general public that in case any person/s, institution or agency has any claim/s whatsoever or have any objection for sale of the schedule property, are required to communicate to the undersigned in writing along with supporting documents within 10 (ten) days from the date of this Notice. If no such claim or objection is received, my client will proceed to complete the sale transaction and no claim or objection whatsoever will be entertained thereafter.

SCHEDULE

All the piece and parcel of the industrially converted land bearing New Survey No.40/3, Old Survey No.40, vide M R No.T13/2022-23, Khatha No.43, measuring an extent of 30.12 guntas situated at Bellahalli Village, Yelahanka Hoblli, Bengaluru North Taluk, Bengaluru **and bounded on the :**

East by : Remaining portion of Sy. No.41 belonging to Late Mrs. Sherfunnisa;
West by : Land in Sy. No.40/4;
North by : Road; and
South by : Property in Sy. No.44.

Date : 12.10.2025
Place : Bengaluru

SATISH K.V
Advocate
S-2, II Floor, Harshita Arcade
No.138, I Main, Sheshadripuram
Bengaluru – 560 020.
e-mail : satishmukunda@gmail.com
M : 98453 93750

झारखण्ड सरकार
कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय
पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमंडल, पाकुड़

शुद्धि पत्र

इस कार्यालय के अति अल्पकालीन निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या– **DWSD/PKR/17/2025-26** जिसका **PR No.- 363828 Drinking Water & Sanitation Division Pakur (25-26)_D** द्वारा प्रकाशित प्राक्किलित राशि **1,62,241.00** के बदले **1,62,841.00** रू0 पढ़ा जाय।

कार्यपालक अभियंता,
पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमण्डल, पाकुड़।

PR 363893 (Drinking Water and Sanitation) 25-26 (D)

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

Materials Management Department
Addendum To Auction Programme October'25
Notice No: 10/25

e-Auction will be conducted for disposal of Ferrous scrap, Non-Ferrous scrap, other Misc scrap, condemned Wagon, Coaches & Locos, Scrap Rails and other Permanent Way scrap material.

Sl. No.	E-Auction Conducted By	Additional Auctions incorporated in October Auction Schedule	Material for auction
1	GSD/PER	15/10/25	The details of items to be sold in e-auction will be available in catalogue www.ireps.gov.in website
2	CSSD/GOC	17/10/25	
3	PTJ	28/10/25	
4	MAS	17/10/25	
5	SA	2810/25	
6	TVC	29/10/25	
7	PGT	23/10/25	
8	TPJ	16/10/25	
9	MDU	31/10/25	

All other auctions scheduled for October 2025 remains unaltered.

For detailed terms and conditions and downloading of catalogue please visit our web-site **http:// www.ireps.gov.in->E-Auction->Sale->Live Auctions.**

Principal Chief Materials Manager

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY

CORRIGENDUM No. 44/2025

Kindly refer this office advertised tender no. 20255020 opening date on 10/10/2025 published in advertised tender notice no EPS/95/2025. The amendment made is as under: **Tender No. & short Description** : 20255020 **Descrip-** IGBT BASED 3-PHASE DRIVE PROPULSION EQUIPMENTS., **Tender Opening date:** From 10/10/2025, To 24/10/2025, Latest terms & condition and full information is available on website **https://www.ireps.gov.in.**

(SD)
For Principle Chief Material Manager
West Central Railway, Jabalpur

स्वच्छ भारत अभियान
एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

CENTRAL RAILWAY

SOLAPUR DIVISION
E-Tender Notice No.:06-2025-GSU-Elect-G

CPM. Gati Shakti, Central Railway. Solapur on behalf of the president of India Invites E-tender from the reputed firms / Contractor for the following work. **01. Name of work :** Electrical General services portion of work in connection with provision of new pit line at Kalaburgi station. (Re-invitation), **02. Approximate cost of work :** Rs.1,76,96,884.34, **03. Earnest Money :** Rs. 2,38,500.00, **04. Completion period of the work :** 12 (Twelve)Months,**05. Maintenance Period :** 12 (Twelve) months from the date of commissioning/taking over of the installation. **06. Last Date and time for submission for tender on www.ireps.gov.in website :** 03.11.2025 up to 15.00 hrs. **07. Date and time of opening of tender on www.ireps.gov.in :** 03.11.2025 after 15.30 hrs. **08. Website particulars : www.ireps.gov.in, 09. Note :** The Prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website frequently before the date of closing of tender to note any change/corrigendum issued for this tender website **www.ireps.gov.in.** ANJ-63

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SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

PROFORMA 10-01
INDIAN RAILWAYS
PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

Notice is hereby given to all users of Railway lines and premises situated on the completed section of the under noted section of the South Western Railway, that 25000 Volts, 50 Hz AC, overhead traction wires will be energized on or after the date specified against the section. On and from the same date, the overhead traction line shall be treated as **LIVE** at all times and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said overhead line in Makkajipalli (Exclusive) to Dharmavaram (Exclusive)

Sl. No.	Section	Chainage in KM		Probable date of Energization
1	MKJ (Exclusive) to DMM (Exclusive) UP Line	149/659.00	176/932.00	31.10.2025
2	New proposed (Common Loop Line) NGM Yard Rd. No. 4	163/045.50	164/417.00	31.10.2025
3	New proposed (Goods Loop Line) NGM Yard Rd. No. 5	163/207.50	164/205.50	31.10.2025
4	Down Main Line NGM yard towards MKJ	163/207.50	163315.50	31.10.2025
5	Down Main Line NGM yard Towards DMM	164/588.00	164/718.00	31.10.2025
6	Down Line Crossover towards DMM	164/444.00	164/534.00	31.10.2025
7	Down loop line NGM yard	163/815.00	164/534.00	31.10.2025
8	Feeder lines NGM yard	163/095.00	163/248.00	31.10.2025
9	Feeder lines NGM yard	163/594.50	163/815.00	31.10.2025
10	Feeder lines NGM yard	164/354.00	164/547.50	31.10.2025
11	Feeder lines NGM yard	164/345.00	164/655.50	31.10.2025

PROFORMA 10-02
INDIAN RAILWAYS
INTRODUCTION of AC 25 kV TRACTION
"WARNING TO ROAD USERS"

It is notified for information of the Public that in connection with introduction of 25 kV AC electric traction over the section Makkajipalli (Exclusive) 149/659.00 km – Dharmavaram (Exclusive) 176/932.00 km of the South Western Railway, height gauges have been erected at all the level crossing with clear **maximum height 4.78m** above road level with a view to prevent loads of excessive height from coming into contact or dangerous proximity to live traction wire **(Contact Wire), which shall be at a height of minimum 5.5 m above the rail level at level crossings.**

Public are hereby notified to observe the height specified above for the purpose of loading vehicles and to see that the loads carried in road vehicles do not infringe the height gauges under any circumstances.

The dangers of a load of excessive height are as follows-

i. Danger to the height gauge and consequent obstruction to the road as well as the railway line.
ii. Danger to the materials or equipment carried or the vehicle itself.
iii. Danger of fire and risk of life due to contact with or dangerous proximity to the conductors.

Place: Bengaluru
Date: 06.10.2025
PUB/539/AAS/PRB/SWR/2025-26

Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer, Traction Distribution-II, Construction
Bengaluru Cantonment-560046

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NOT GLUED AT GRASSROOTS? 'Friendly fight' likely in some places, to unite later for power

Leaders firm on BJP-JD(S) pact for LB polls, but cadre resist

SUJAY B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

A file photo of BJP-JD(S) leaders holding a protest against the Congress government on the Vidhana Soudha premises in Bengaluru. The alliance reaped rich dividends in the 2024 parliamentary elections, bagging 19 of the 28 constituencies up for grabs in the state. But the cadre of the two parties are sceptical on whether the tie-up will work in local body elections.

Having tasted success in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and with local body elections (including those to Greater Bengaluru Authority) months away, the BJP-JD(S) alliance faces a dilemma—leaders deem it beneficial, but the cadre are uncomfortable.

At a recent press conference, former prime minister and JD(S) supremo H D Deve Gowda referred to his cordial relations with PM Narendra Modi, and categorically stated that the alliance would continue for all elections. Top leaders within BJP are also firm on the alliance.

After a crushing defeat in the 2023 Assembly elections—BJP won 66 seats and JD(S) got 19 (lowest for both parties since 1999)—the two parties did well in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, bagging 19 out of 28 seats. This is in contrast to the JD(S)' alliance with Congress in 2019 that went awry, with the alliance bagging merely 2 of the 28 seats.

"BJP and JD(S) are both essentially anti-Congress parties. They have strong support from dominant communities – Lingayats support BJP, while Vokkaligas back JD(S). Their relationship is symbiotic, where both are in need of the other," a BJP source said.

While Vokkaliga leaders within BJP want the alliance to continue, others are not keen on it, the source added. Things are rough at the grassroots, especially in old Mysuru region.

Disagreements are especially stark in some Assembly constituencies where the contest is primarily between BJP and JD(S).

A BJP MLA said a strong performance in old Mysuru region (largest of the 6 electoral zones in Karnataka) was necessary for BJP to come to power on its own (with 113 seats or more), which it is yet to achieve in Karnataka.

"We want to have a strong cadre base. These local body elections are elections of the cadre, where we need to give them power. An alliance may help in some places, but may affect our cadre in some districts".

While expressing the desire for the BJP to fight alone, the MLA said the party's decision was final.

A legislator from JD(S) admitted that there were differences in some places.

"Locally, there are some issues. BJP leaders are not taking our workers into confidence. There's no coordination in Hassan and our leaders don't talk face to face with Dr K Sudhakar, BJP MP from Chickballapur".

However, he said the JD(S) top brass was firm that the alliance would continue for the local body polls and added that differences would be sorted out.

There are also suggestions that the two parties may engage in a 'friendly fight' in the local body polls, as retaining cadre was crucial for both.

A source within JD(S) said the contours of the local body elections were very different from those of bigger elections.

"In local body elections, all parties think about organisational strengthening. Even BJP may not agree for an alliance in local body polls. For us, it will be difficult. It may be a friendly fight, but we will unite to capture power. Even when we were with Congress, we didn't fight local body polls together".

Political Analyst and vice-president of Nitte Education Trust Sandeep Shastri said, "Given the dynamics of local body elections, they may feel it's perfectly okay for both sides to have a friendly contest. But the real crunch will come in the Assembly elections".

"Since JD(S) is usually content with 2-3 seats in Lok Sabha polls, they agreed for three while allying with BJP then, and won two of those. But the dynamics are different in Assembly elections. As per the arithmetic of the Lok Sabha polls, JD(S) will get 24 Assembly seats. Will they be satisfied? If not, will the BJP be ready to concede more?".

Articulating that both BJP and JD(S) would have to make necessary sacrifices to continue the alliance for the 2028 Assembly polls, Shastri felt it was prima facie unlikely.

There are also concerns that the recent communal clashes at Keragodu, Nagamangala and Maddur in Mandya district – a traditional bastion of the JD(S) – may lead to a widening cadre base for BJP at the expense of the regional party.

The decision on the alliance for elections to local bodies will be crucial as it will have a direct bearing on the grassroots polity of both parties.

Dhawan Rakesh eyes political entry

CM's grandson says politics has been part of his life

BENGALURU, DHNS

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's grandson Dhawan Rakesh has expressed his interest in entering politics, hinting that the third generation of the Siddaramaiah family may soon take the political plunge.

Dhavan, who recently shared photographs with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Instagram, wrote, "Politics has always been a part of the background for me, but meeting someone who constantly faces pushback and still chooses to stand for what he believes in was different."

The CM's grandson mentioned that his meeting with Rahul Gandhi took place on August 8.

He further added, "My grandfather recognised how much I respect honest leaders and made this meeting possible. Honesty is often neglected in politics, but I wish to meet leaders who strive to be honest and remain true to their beliefs."

Dhawan stated that while politics has always been part of his life, Rahul Gandhi's steadfastness in upholding his principles despite opposition inspired him.

"Meeting such a leader was a unique experience. I conveyed my immense respect for him. As a student now, and as a lawyer in the future, I wish to stand with him and walk alongside him," he said.

In his post, Dhawan also emphasised the need for greater vigilance and transparency in public life.

"We must honour leaders who lead the nation through truth, integrity, and openness. Rahul Gandhi engages sincerely with people and the media. Likewise, we too must come forward for honest dialogue," he wrote.

Dhawan Rakesh had recently appeared alongside his grandfather Siddaramaiah at the RCB victory celebration and a Kuruba community felicitation event, drawing public attention to his growing visibility in political circles.

Dhawan Rakesh seen with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, grandfather Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala on the sidelines of the 'vote adhikar rally', in Bengaluru on August 8.

Not in a hurry to occupy CM's chair: DKS

BENGALURU, DHNS: Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Saturday clarified that he was in no hurry to stake his claim to the CM's chair.

Accusing a few media outlets of misrepresenting his statements, Shivakumar said, "I never said that the time had come for me to become the chief minister. My statement has been twisted. I know my goal, there's no need for me to issue such statements. Some people said that I should become CM, but I haven't said that".

Shivakumar said he would not hesitate to file a defamation case against those twisting his statements.

"I am working day and night to serve people. If you are going to telecast twisted statements, I will not co-operate with you. You will not be invited to press conferences," said the deputy chief minister.

Appealing to the media not to indulge in politicking, he said, "God will present me with the opportunity when the time is ripe".

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FRESH FROM THE FARM

Farm workers harvest onions at an agricultural field near Chikkamagaluru on Saturday. Heavy rains have damaged the crop in many parts of the state. PTI PHOTO

Activist moves Guv seeking independent probe into MGNREGS scam

BENGALURU, DHNS

More than a year after the district ombudsman for Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in Shivamogga district issued an order for suspension of a computer operator for diverting wages to his wife's accounts without getting any work done, an appellate authority has overturned the order, prompting the complainant to move the Governor's office against the shocking acquittal.

Ombudsmen are independent authorities appointed to inquire into complaints of irregularities in the MGNREGS programmes. Following a complaint by Manjunath H of Lanchamukta Karnataka Nirmana Vedike, Shivamogga, Ombudsman P D Ganapati looked into irregularities in the MGNREGS payments in Huruli gram panchayat and found that Gurunath, the data entry operator in the panchayat was responsible for the same.

"Gurunath has a job card in the name of his wife and by adding his name in the card, has violated the MGNREGS rules. It is established that he has given attendance to his wife without work and is directly responsible for providing unemployment allowance," he said, recommending Gurunath's suspension.

However, in an order dated August 21, an appellate authority overturned the Ombudsman's order by citing technical grounds, including the lack of GPS-photos to prove that Hemavathi, Gurunath's wife, received wages though she was absent from work.

In his complaint to the governor, Manjunath said the "shocking" acquittal by the appellate authority goes against the law.

"This order is biased, unlawful, and contrary to the Ombudsman's clear findings. It absolves the accused by shifting responsibility to the Barefoot Technician, ignores the prohibition on officials holding job cards, dismisses proven denial of unemployment allowances worth Rs 1,43,000, and even accepts a dubious photo produced by the accused as evidence," Manjunath said, seeking the governor's intervention in suspending the appellate authority's order and a direction for independent inquiry.

HC upholds transfer of associate professor from UAS to VC Farm Mandya

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Karnataka High Court has refused to interfere with the transfer of an associate professor from the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru, to Visheshwaraiah Canal Farm, Mandya (VC Farm).

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice C M Joshi held that the transfer of Jagannath Olekar was valid since VC Farm, Mandya, was part of the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) when the transfer orders were issued.

IN THE HIGH COURT

Jagannath Olekar was serving as associate professor and field officer for the cost of cultivation scheme in the Department of Agriculture Economics at UAS. He was transferred to VC Farm, Mandya, on July 8, 2024. His petition challenging this order was dismissed by a single bench and he preferred an appeal.

In the appeal, it was argued on behalf of Olekar that the position offered at VC Farm was not equivalent to his role at UAS, Bengaluru. It was also contended that the transfer was executed without the consent of the Union government, citing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the UAS and the Union government for a comprehensive scheme to study the cost of cultivation of principal crops in India. In the appeal proceedings, a cabinet decision of January 13, 2025, was cited stating that the new Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences University (Integrated) at VC Farm in Mandya District was established and thus VC Farm was no longer part of UAS, Bengaluru.

The division bench noted that the terms and conditions of the service on which Olekar was appointed, entailed the possibility of a transfer in accordance with the rules of the University. The bench further said that he was not transferred to a post, which is either lower in rank than the current post or less remunerative. In fact, he was moved to a position with a higher grade than his current post, the bench said. The bench further observed that there is no pre-condition, in the MoU, requiring consultation with the union government.

"Admittedly, V C Farm, Mandya, was part of the respondent / University at the time when the impugned transfer orders were issued. Thus, the appellant stands transferred to VC Farm. The question whether he is required to be absorbed in the new University or is required to be repatriated to the respondent, is not a subject matter of the present appeal," the court said.

Five social media handles booked for derogatory remarks on CJI

BENGALURU, DHNS: The cybercrime police have registered a case against five social media handles for allegedly posting derogatory remarks against Chief Justice of India (CJI) B R Gavai, a day after a Delhi-based lawyer attempted to hurl a shoe at him.

According to the FIR, Kesari Nandan, Sridharkumar, Nagendra Prasad, Ramesh Naik, Manunath MC Manju, have been booked under BNS Section 352 (Intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace) and relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

A suo motu case was registered at the Cybercrime Police Station after an officer from the social media monitoring cell came across derogatory comments made by five Facebook handles.

One of the accounts, Manunath M C Manju, had posted this in Kannada: "Instead of chappal, there should've been something else... This is a reminder... it will be done like Godse."

The other handles made personal remarks against the CJI and used expletives.

On Wednesday, the Vidhana Soudha police registered a Zero FIR against 71-year-old advocate Rakesh Kishore, who was the advocate who attempted to hurl a shoe at the CJI inside the Supreme Court on October 6.

Deve Gowda likely to be discharged from hospital today

BENGALURU DHNS: Former prime minister H D Deve Gowda, who has been hospitalised for the last seven days, is likely to be discharged on Sunday.

On Saturday, former chief minister B S Yediyurappa and his son-BJP president B Y Vijayendra visited Deve Gowda at a private hospital.

On Thursday, Nirmalananda Swami, the seer of Adichunchanagiri Mutt, had also visited him.

Deve Gowda was hospitalised late in the night on October 6 following Urinary Tract Infections (UTI) and kept on observation at the Intensive Care Unit for the first three days and shifted to a special ward later.

Labourer hit by train dies in Vijayanagar district

HARAPANAHALLI (VIJAYANAGAR DISTRICT), DHNS: In a tragic accident, a 35-year-old labourer died after he was struck by a train near Kambatrahalli in Vijayanagar district on Saturday.

Sundar Naik, hailing from Odisha, was employed by an agency that was awarded the contract for fixing cables. On Saturday, Sundar had his headphones on while working and did not hear the Ballari-bound train headed in his direction. Since the train was travelling at a fair speed, the impact was such that Sundar's head was severed from his body, police said.

Women journalists...

Afghan, From Page 3

Congress General Secretary (Communications) Jairam Ramesh, too, piled on. "(Tali) ban on female journalists in India. Shocking and unacceptable that the Govt of India agreed to it – and that too in New Delhi on the eve of the International Day of the Girl Child," he posted on X.

Senior DMK MP Kanimozhi was appalled at the "regressive" move. "How could the BJP government and S Jaishankar allow such a regressive, discriminatory demand and be dictated terms in our own country? This is not diplomacy, it's a complete surrender of our integrity, and a shameful compromise on India's commitment to equality and press freedom," she said.

Trinamool Rajya Sabha Deputy Leader Sagarika Ghose claimed the government again revealed its "failure to evolve a foreign policy in which engagement is separated from endorsement" while party MP Mahua Moitra said the Modi government has "dishonoured" every single Indian woman through the incident.

In its official 'X' handle, the Congress said the incident reflected the "utter disregard for women's dignity that has become normal" under the Modi government.

Speeding BMTC...

BMTC, From Page 3

She sustained severe injuries to her face and head and died on the spot.

Blaming the BMTC bus driver's alleged negligence for the accident, locals present at the scene said, "The bus was speeding and did not slow down at the signal."

Bhuvana lived with her parents in Bovipalya, Mahalaxmi Layout. The sight of the deceased child left her sister and friends devastated. Her parents, who rushed to the spot after hearing the news, were reportedly in a state of shock and utter grief.

The Rajajinagar traffic police have registered a case and further investigations regarding the exact cause of the accident is in progress. The police confirmed that a post-mortem examination was conducted at a private hospital, and the girl's body has been handed over to her family members.

Devadasis' survey: Applicants aged below 40 rejected, 'threatened'

Activists slam govt for seeking multiple documents from survivors

PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS:

The third edition of the socio-economic and educational survey to enumerate Devadasis has run into rough weather as beneficiaries are finding it difficult to get themselves enrolled in the list for want of multiple documents and lack of awareness among enumerators.

The survey was launched on September 15 and is expected to be completed by October 24 in 15 districts of central and north Karnataka, where the number of Devadasis is high.

However, due to poor publicity, not many beneficiaries and their dependents are able to get enrolled.

In 2008, when the survey was last conducted, Karnataka had registered nearly 46,600 Devadasis. But there were allegations that many beneficiaries were left out due to age cut-off and other issues.

Organizations working for the upliftment of Devadasis say the government is committing the same mistakes as in previous two surveys (1993-1994 and 2008-2009) by excluding survivors, particularly those under the age of 40 years, who were forced into this evil practice after the enactment of Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act of 1982.

Bhagyalakshmi, director of Sakshi Trust-Hosapete, said, "The practice continues in Karnataka. It's an overall failure of the government and society".

She said enumerators were threatening that cases would be booked against survivors below the age of 40 years.

At least two Devadasis in Koppal district told *DH* that they received threats from officials when they gave fresh applications for inclusion in list.

"My parents pushed me into this practice when I was 11 years old in 2009, as I was blind. When I went to give my application, officials warned me that a case will be registered and action will be taken against me and my parents," said a Devadasi.

Devadasis and their next three generations are eligible for various benefits from the government, including financial assistance, loans, land for housing, education and livelihood.

With no clear guidelines on documents to be provided by Devadasis or their dependents, several taluk-level officials are seeking multiple documents, including family tree certificates.

Yamanurappa Halavagli, son of a Devadasi and state coordinator of Karnataka Vimuktha Devadasi Mahila Matthu Makkala Vedike, says the government is conducting the survey without proper preparations.

"We need at least one month to get age and family-tree certificates. By the time we get documents, the survey will be over. Many Devadasis will not be able to provide these papers," he added.

R V Chandrashekar, member of the state-level committee for Devadasis, says the government doesn't seem to be serious, as it has not held a single official meeting of the committee.

"The government unilaterally decided the date, process and began the survey. Out of the 15 districts, district-level committees have not been formed in at least six".

Chandrashekar, who was a member of the drafting committee of Karnataka Devadasi (Prevention, Prohibition, Relief and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2025, says the draft which has been sent to the President for approval does not speak about age limit to enroll for benefits.

However, the app created for the survey notifies that the age of the applicant must be less than 40 years. "Many beneficiaries are not submitting applications, fearing action," he said.

Mahesh Babu, managing director of Karnataka State Women's Development Corporation, said the survey was being conducted after four years of discussions and sufficient publicity was given on social media and through other means.

"There are efforts to include non-eligible persons/families in the list to get benefits. If we don't prevent such instances, it will defeat the survey's very purpose," he said.

CJI: Specialised enactment needed to guard girl child

CJI, From Page 3

"To secure her safety is not merely to protect her body, but to free her spirit. To create a society where she can hold her head high in dignity and where her aspirations are nourished by education and equality," the CJI said in the presence of Union Minister for Women and Child Development Annpurna Devi and Cynthia McCaffrey, the country representative for UNICEF-India.

"Furthermore, in today's technological era, where innovation defines progress, it is important to recognise that technology, though empowering, also brings new vulnerabilities, especially for the girl child," he said.

"Training programmes for police officers, educators health professionals and local administrators should consequently incorporate a sensitive approach, equipping them to respond with empathy, nuance and contextual understanding," he said.

Justice B V Nagarathna, the chairperson of the JJC of the apex court, said a young girl in India can be said to be a truly equal citizen only when she can freely aspire to do anything that her male counterpart does.

"Put differently, the odds of her being born at all, having access to the right nutrition, care, education and material resources, a secure and safe environment, developing a distinct sense of self and being able to achieve whatever she sets her mind to has to be equivalent to that of a boy child born in this country. She should not merely survive but actively thrive," she said.

Justice J B Pardiwala, a member of the JJC, said protecting the girl child means ensuring that every girl has the right to live, learn and grow with equality, free from harm, discrimination and violence, such as female foeticide and child marriage.

Justice Pardiwala introduced a handbook on "Child Rights and the Law", prepared by the Centre for Research and Planning of the apex court under the guidance of the JJC.

Kerala actor among 3 booked for 'communal abuse' of driver

MANGALURU, DHNS: Three persons, including an actor from Kerala, have been booked after a cab driver in Mangaluru made a complaint to the police alleging communal abuse.

DCP (Law and Order) Mithun H N said that two including the actor have been detained for questioning in connection with the case.

The DCP said the incident took place on October 9. Three individuals all from Kerala — Santhosh Abraham, actor Jayakrishnan, and Vimal, had booked a cab through an app, providing a pickup address at Bejai New Road, Mangaluru.

In his complaint, cab driver Ahmed Shafiq said that he contacted them to confirm the pickup location. However, individuals who spoke to him in Hindi used derogatory language against him and called him a "Muslim extremist" and "terrorist." Later, they also abused him in Hindi and his mother in Malayalam, he alleged.

Based on the complaint, a case has been registered at the Urwa Police Station under Sections 352 and 353(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The investigation is in progress.

Along with his complaint, the cab driver had also submitted an audio recording of the phone conversation to the police. The police have collected their voice samples as well.

GONE WITH THE RAIN

A farmer shows cabbage damaged due to heavy rains in Abbani of Kolar taluk on Saturday. DH PHOTO

Will modify tunnel road plan if needed: DKS on Lalbagh fears

Lalbagh, From Page 3

Shivakumar instructed the officials present, including Commissioner of Bengaluru Central City Corporation Rajendra Cholan, to note down the names and contact numbers of all complainants to ensure prompt action.

Among the specific grievances, a resident of Jayanagar 4th Block complained about dysfunctional streetlights, which Shivakumar promised to resolve immediately. "All the street lights in Bengaluru will be replaced. LED lamps will be installed and the works will be done in the next four months," he assured.

Traffic congestion, particularly near schools, was another major pain point. A local highlighted that schools often do not use their own premises for parking, forcing parents to park their vehicles on the street and worsening the gridlock. The deputy CM promised to "think about this and take necessary action".

Addressing the problem of garbage, Shivakumar repeated his assertion that a "big mafia' was behind it and that he was determined to dismantle it soon.

Replying to a request for exemption from Occupancy Certificate and Completion Certificate for sites above 30x40 sq feet dimension, he said: "We gave exemption for 30x40 sites yesterday, we will take a decision on the larger dimensions."

Responding to the issue of potholes, especially after heavy rainfall, Shivakumar assured reporters that "wet mixing process" would be used to fill potholes during the rainy season. Wet mixing is a method typically employed as an emergency process for asphalting during rains. He conceded that potholes resurfacing after a week of being filled is "natural when it rains heavily" but maintained that the issue "will be resolved".

Plaint made to SIT seeking probe into all 'unnatural' deaths in Dharmasthala

Alleges previous investigations failed to identify culprits

MANGALURU, DHNS

Urging a detailed investigation into the alleged unnatural deaths and missing cases in Dharmasthala over the past four to five decades, Kusumavathi (mother of the Sowjanya), members of victims families, and activists submitted a complaint on Saturday to the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the alleged mass burial case in Dharmasthala.

They said in several cases, the bodies were cremated on the same day of the death or the following day. This goes against the Karnataka Investigation of Unnatural Deaths and Conduct of Inquest Rules, 2004, Even in the murder that took place in the lodges, the identities of the deceased were not verified before cremation. They demanded re-investigation of the 2012 murder of mahout Narayana and his sister Yamuna, the 1986 murder of Padmalatha, and the 1979 murder of Vedavalli.

Speaking to mediapersons, activist Girish Mattannavar said that several deaths and murders have occurred in Dharmasthala over the past four to five decades. However, previous investigations failed to identify the culprits. To bring a logical conclusion to these cases, leading legal experts, retired judges, and former police officers have been working with locals and activists over the past 15 days, collecting evidence and records of alleged crimes, and preparing a detailed report, he said.

In her complaint, Kusumavathi demanded that the SIT exercise its full statutory powers as a police station to register FIRs for the various deaths and murders.

She said, "The investigation into my daughter's murder was systematically botched, and an innocent man was framed, only to be acquitted by a court that admonished the investigators for their malicious prosecution. My daughter's real killers remain free. While my own battle for justice for Sowjanya continues before this SIT, I submit this comprehensive complaint not just as a grieving mother, but as a representative voice for the hundreds of other families whose loved ones have vanished or been found dead under mysterious circumstances in Dharmasthala."

M'luru couple's findings in WHO...

TB, From Page 3

The team demonstrated how a monthly food basket containing 5 kg of rice and 1.5 kg of lentils per adult, along with multi-vitamin tablets, could decrease new cases of contagious pulmonary tuberculosis by 48% among the family members of a TB patient. The study was conducted among 2,800 patients and their over 10,000 family members in four districts of Jharkhand.

"The risk of TB in family members is much higher due to the shared environment of poverty and food insecurity. So, a family-based approach is promising not just for patient outcomes of treatment success and reduced deaths in the short term, but also in reducing overall TB burden in the long term," Madhavi said.

Following the trial, the governments of Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, and Himachal Pradesh are distributing food baskets to the households of TB patients, while the Centre has also enhanced its monetary support.

India has the world's highest TB burden with an estimated 28 lakh plus new cases and over 3,20,000 deaths in 2023. This means 37 Indians die every hour due to TB, according to official data. In Karnataka, TB kills nearly 5,000 people each year. Malnutrition is the major risk factor for TB in India," said Anurag, noting that improving nutrition could be a game-changer in the fight to end TB.

Another key finding showed that access to improved food can reduce mortality in TB patients by 35%, and weight gain within the first two months of receiving food reduces the risk of TB-related death by 60%. Studies further indicated that providing food baskets to at least 50% of families with a TB patient nationwide could prevent nearly 4,00,000 deaths and 9,00,000 TB episodes between 2023 and 2035. "This was a trial based on field observations, and it's been incorporated in medical textbooks and WHO guidelines within two years," he said.

Govt to appoint guest teachers to aided schools

SHIVAMOGGA, DHNS: Minister for School Education and Literacy Madhu Bangarappa announced on Saturday that the government would appoint guest teachers to fill vacancies at government-aided Kannada-medium schools.

Participating in an interactive event organised by the Press Trust in Shivamogga, Madhu said, "We will issue a notification on the appointment of 18,000 teachers – 6,000 for aided schools and 12,000 for government schools – soon. In addition to those appointed by the government, the management of the aided schools can appoint guest teachers to fill vacant posts. We may have to appoint four to five thousand guest teachers to aided schools. They will all receive an honorarium from the government. We have taken this decision in order to save Kannada-medium schools."

Madhu, also the Shivamogga district in-charge minister, said that there was a proposal to offer grant-in-aid to schools started 10 years after 1995. "We will start the process once Chief Minister Siddaramaiah approves the proposal," said the minister, adding that the Department of School Education was establishing two residential schools where disabled children would be provided both education and treatment.

He said government has decided to restart reserving seats for children belonging to economically weaker sections of the society in private schools under the Right to Education Act (RTE) at places where there are no government schools.

◆ WEATHER ◆

Overview: Rainfall occurred at many places over South Interior and North Interior Karnataka and some places over Coastal Karnataka
Forecast Oct 12: Rainfall to occur at some places over the state.

INTERIOR NORTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Belagavi	30.2	20.8	00
Bidar	31.4	21	00
Vijayapura	31.5	20	00
Dharwad	30	20.4	00
Haveri	30	22.4	00
Kalaburagi	33.6	21.2	00
Raichur	31.2	20.6	00
COASTAL			
Honnavar	31.6	24	00
Karwar	33.6	24.8	00
Shirali	NA	NA	NA
Mangaluru	32	24.3	00

INTERIOR SOUTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Agumbe	28.8	19.9	00
Bengaluru	29.1	20	68.3
Ballari	NA	NA	NA
Chamarajanagar	NA	NA	NA
Chikkamagaluru	NA	NA	NA
Chitradurga	26.5	21	0.3
Davangere	28	20	00
Hassan	27.7	NA	01
Mysuru	31	19	35
Madikeri	NA	NA	NA
Kolar	29	18	49.6

OTHER STATIONS

New Delhi	29.9	19.4	00
Kolkata	32.3	24.4	34
Mumbai	33.7	23	00
Chennai	32.1	25.8	00
Pune	32.8	19.4	00
Hyderabad	32.4	18.5	00
Th'puram	34.3	23.7	11

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NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

1. AWES Campus, Bangalore - 77 invites Tenders from reputed Vendors for "Providing Conservancy Services at Army Welfare Education Society(AWES) Campus, Bangalore – 560077".
2. Scope of Work and other details are available in our web site www.aifd.edu.in and www.aihmctbangalore.edu.in
3. The last date for submission of Tenders is 10 Nov 2025.

Sd/- Registrar and HoA

HIGH COURT OF KARNATAKA, BENGALURU-01
HCC No.25/2022 Date: 10.10.2025
BRIEF RE-TENDER NOTIFICATION

Tender is called by the High Court of Karnataka, Bengaluru for Contract for running "Canteen" in the premises of the High Court of Karnataka, Dharwad Bench, Dharwad through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal of Centre for e-Governance, Bengaluru.

The last date to upload the tender is fixed as on **25.10.2025 at 4:00 p.m.** For more details visit **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/#/portal/searchTender/ live** website.

Sd/-
(N.G.Dinesh)
Registrar (Computers) and
Tender Inviting And Accepting
Authority, High Court of Karnataka,
Bengaluru.

DIPR/CP/3219/MAA/2025-26

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರಕಾರ
ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ನಗರಾಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಕೋಶ, ಉತ್ತರ ಕನ್ನಡ, ಕಾರವಾರ – 581 301
DISTRICT URBAN DEVELPOMENT CELL, D.C. OFFICE UTTARA KANNADA DISTRICT, KARWAR-581 301
Telephone: 08382 221170 Email: ka.uttarakannada.dudc@gmail.com
No: UK/DUDC/AmrutNagarothanaPhase-4/CR/2024-25 Dated: 10-10-2025

Short Term Tender Notification

The Executive Engineer, District Urban Development Cell, Uttar Kannada district, Karwar is inviting tenders to procure Goods & Materials as per KTPP Act 1999 Rule 2000 from Registered Manufacturers/Agency/Authorised Dealers for Amruth Nagarothan-4 Project through KPPP Portal **(http:/kppp.karnataka.gov.in).** The details are given as below

Uploading of tender documents on **10-10-2025 at 17.00 hrs,** Pre bid Meeting / Tender for clarification/ with sample test date:**15-10-2025 at 11:00 hrs,** Last date for uploading of completed tender documents on **23-10-2025 at 17.00 hrs**, Opening of Technical Bid: **24-10-2025 at 17.30 hrs** & Opening of Financial Bid: **27-10-2025 at 11.00 hrs.**

ULB Name	Indent Number
TMC Haliyal	DMA/2025-26/IND4838/Call -2
CMC Dandeli	DMA/2025-26/IND4831/Call -2
CMC Karwar	DMA/2025-26/IND5197/Call -2
CMC Dandeli CMC Karwar TMC Ankola	DMA/2025-26/IND4966/Call-2

All other required tender information may be availed from the website **http:/kppp.karnataka.gov.in.** and **http://www.uttarakannadadudc.mrc.gov.in/.**or Project Director, DUDC, UK Office .

Sd/-, Executive Engineer
District Urban Development Cell
DC Office, U.K. District, Karwar

DIPR/ADK/KSMCA/594/25-26 dt. 10.10.2025

Cop 'suicide': SP transferred; family refuses post-mortem

CHANDIGARH, PTI: The Haryana government on Saturday shunted out Rohtak Superintendent of Police Narendra Bijarniya, one of the cops against whom IPS officer Y Puran Kumar's wife was seeking action for allegedly abetting his suicide, even as the Opposition said that Kumar's family is not getting justice.

In his first comments in the sensational case that involves allegations of caste-based discrimination against the deceased officer, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said whoever is found guilty in the probe will face action irrespective of their position and asked the Opposition not to politicise it.

As the controversy deepened, several officials and ministers from Haryana and politicians from various states met Kumar's wife, IAS officer Amneet P Kumar, on Saturday.

Chandigarh DGP Sagar Preet Hooda, who also visited the residence of Puran Kumar, said his family members have refused to give their consent for the post-mortem due to some grievances, and discussions are underway to resolve them.

In a 'final note' purportedly left behind by Kumar (52),he had accused eight senior cops, including Bijarniya and Haryana DGP Shatrujeet Kapur, of "blatant caste-based discrimination, targeted mental harassment, public humiliation and atrocities".

Sonia slams systemic bias in letter to late cop's wife

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Top Congress leader Sonia Gandhi said the death of IPS officer Y Puran Kumar was a reminder that the "prejudiced and biased" attitude of those in power deprived even the seniormost officers of social justice.

Sonia Gandhi

In a letter to bureaucrat Amneet, the wife of Haryana Additional DGP Puran Kumar, who died by suicide, Sonia said the death was both shocking and deeply saddening, and the entire country was with her in the fight for justice.

"My heartfelt condolences to you and your entire family in this time of immense difficulty," she wrote in her letter.

"The passing of Y Puran Kumar is a reminder to us that even today, the prejudiced and biased attitude of those in power deprives even the most senior officials of social justice. I, and millions of people of the country, stand with you on this path to justice," she said.

Earlier this week, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi blamed the BJP's "Manuvadi" ideology for the alleged suicide, claiming that it has become a "curse" for the SCs, STs, OBCs, and weaker sections.

16th judge recuses from IFS officer Sanjiv Chaturvedi's case

Judges across all levels continue to exit sans explanation, a rare pattern in judicial history

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

In the unending spate of recusal of judges from hearing cases of Uttarakhand cadre Indian Forest Service officer Sanjiv Chaturvedi, now a 16th judge has opted out from hearing the case.

A senior judge of Uttarakhand High Court, Justice Alok Verma, has also recused himself from hearing of a contempt case filed by Chaturvedi against CAT members and registry, for 'wilful disobedience' of its stay order.

This is seen as a record in judicial history of the country, as never have so many judges recused from hearing of cases of a particular person.

Just 12 days ago, Justice Ravindra Maithani had recused from hearing the case of Chaturvedi, ordering that, 'List before another bench of which I (Ravindra Maithani, J.) am is not a member'.

The order passed by Justice Alok Verma on October 8 read as, 'List before another Bench'.

This order, like previous other orders, does not mention any specific reason for recusal, making it all the more unusual.

He is the fourth judge of Uttarakhand High Court to recuse from hearing Chaturvedi's case.

Before him, Justice Rakesh Thapliyal had recused in May 2023 from hearing Chaturvedi's case related to the summoning of documents of his anti-corruption investigation as CVO, AIIMS, in his appraisal report case, and Justice Manoj Tiwari, in February 2024, in his case related to the summoning of documents from Appointment Committee of Cabinet (ACC) regarding his central deputation case.

None of the four judges mentioned any reasons in the recusal order.

What is the case?

The contempt case stems from suo motu proceedings initiated by CAT against senior Indian Forest Service officer Sanjiv Chaturvedi on October 17, 2024. The Uttarakhand High Court had stayed the case until October 7, 2025, but CAT proceeded on September 12, appointing a senior advocate as amicus curiae. Chaturvedi has approached the high court challenging this action.

'Very intriguing'

An all of a sudden recusal of Justice Alok Verma was found apparently "very intriguing" as he was hearing cases of Chaturvedi up to August 29 in a division bench headed by the Chief Justice of Uttarakhand High Court.

This is the sixth judicial recusal this year in Chaturvedi's case, with two CAT judges- Harvinder Oberai and B Anand, recusing in February 2025 and ACJM Neha Kushwaha, recusing in April 2025, apart from two High Court Judges.

So far two Supreme Court judges-Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice UU Lalit (since both retired), four high Court judges, two lower court judges and eight CAT (Central Administrative Tribunal) judges, including a Chairman, CAT, have recused from hearing cases of Sanjiv Chaturvedi.

In April 2025, Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (ACJM) Neha Kushwaha had recused from hearing a defamation case filed by Chaturvedi against CAT judge Manish Garg, citing her 'previous family relations' with another CAT judge, DS Mahra.

In February 2025, a division bench of CAT consisting of Harvinder Oberai and B Anand had recused themselves, without citing any reason, by simply directing the Registry not to list cases of Chaturvedi before them in the future.

Trump treats Modi as great personal friend: US envoy-designate

Gor meets top Indian leaders, discusses trade & defence ties

ANIRBAN BHAUMIK
NEW DELHI, DHNS

President Donald Trump considers Prime Minister Narendra Modi "a great personal friend", said Sergio Gor, who has been appointed the new US ambassador to India, as he visited New Delhi on Saturday amid speculation that the leaders of the two nations might meet in Kuala Lumpur to iron out wrinkles in bilateral relations.

Gor called on the PM and handed over a picture of Trump and Modi addressing journalists at the White House, where they met on February 13.

Trump wrote on the picture, "Mr PM, you are great", and signed.

"Glad to receive Sergio Gor, Ambassador-designate of the US to India. I'm confident that his tenure will further strengthen the India–US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership [sic]," Modi posted on X.

SERGIO GOR
US Ambassador-designate

"President Trump considers Modi a great and personal friend. In fact, just before I left for New Delhi, they had an incredible phone call. That is something that will continue over the weeks and months ahead.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with US Ambassador-designate to India Sergio Gor during a meeting in New Delhi on Saturday. PTI

Though Gor's nomination as Washington's envoy to New Delhi has been confirmed by the US Senate, he has not yet taken over. He continues to serve as the director of the White House Presidential Personnel Office.

He, however, came on a short visit to New Delhi, accompanied by US Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Michael J Rigas. He had separate meetings with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri.

"In fact, just before I left for New Delhi, they (Trump and Modi) had an incredible phone call. And that is something that will continue over the weeks and months ahead," Gor told reporters.

He said he discussed bilateral issues, including defence, trade, and technology. "We also discussed the importance of critical minerals and the importance of both of our nations," he said.

"The US values its relationship with India, and under the strong leadership of President Donald J Trump and Prime Minister Modi, I am optimistic about the days ahead for both of our nations."

What made New Delhi cautious about the proposed Modi-Trump meeting is the possible implications of such a meeting in Kuala Lumpur in domestic politics just ahead of the Assembly elections in Bihar, particularly in view of the stress in the bilateral relations not only because the 50% tariff the US imposed on India and the unfinished trade negotiations, but also because Washington disregarded India's sensitivities and, over the past few months, warmed up to the civil-military leadership of Pakistan.

PM launches new agri schemes worth Rs 35,000 cr

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Accusing previous Congress governments of neglecting the farm sector, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the Opposition party lacked "vision" and strategy for the growth of this crucial sector.

The PM was addressing a gathering after launching two major agricultural schemes with an outlay of Rs 35,440 crore to boost pulses production and improve the farm sector's growth in 100 low-performing districts.

Modi, in a special event at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) Pusa campus here, launched the Rs 24,000-crore "Pradhan Mantri Dhan Dhaanya Krishi Yojana" (PM-DDKY) and the Rs 11,440-crore "Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses".

Under the pulses mission, Modi said, the aim was to increase pulses acreage by 35 lakh hectares by 2030 to boost production and achieve self-reliance. The mission targets raising pulses output from the current 252.38 lakh tonne to 350 lakh tonne by 2030-31.

The PM-DDKY, modelled on the government's Aspirational Districts Programme, is expected to target 100 low-performing agricultural districts and integrate 36 schemes from different ministries, he said.

Talking about the two new schemes, he said they would change the "fate of crores of farmers".

The schemes, already approved by the Cabinet, are expected to be implemented from the upcoming Rabi (winter) season till 2030-31.

The PM also inaugurated projects valued at over Rs 5,450 crore in agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, and food-processing sectors, and laid the foundation stones for additional projects worth around Rs 815 crore.

FARM PUSH

- PM launched two major schemes – PM-DDKY (Rs 24,000 Cr) and Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses (Rs 11,440 Cr) – to strengthen the farm sector.
- PM-DDKY aims to improve farm growth in 100 low-performing districts by integrating 36 central schemes, modeled after the Aspirational Districts Programme.
- Goal to expand pulses cultivation by 35 lakh hectares and raise production from 252 to 350 lakh tonnes by 2030-31.

Women scribes stopped as Muttaqi visits Deoband

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi was on Saturday accorded a rousing reception during his visit to the prestigious Islamic seminary Darul Uloom at Deoband in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur district.

However, the controversy triggered by the Afghan embassy's refusal to permit women journalists at Muttaqi's press conference in Delhi a day earlier followed him to Deoband.

Women journalists, who reached there to cover the visit, were reportedly denied entry into the institution.

Earlier, the seminary had said women scribes would be seated behind curtains in the library where the Afghan minister was scheduled to deliver a speech, claiming it was part of traditions and that there was nothing new in it.

The speech was, however, cancelled as the minister cut his visit short by two hours — he was supposed to stay for five hours — and returned to Delhi by road.

A seminary official said Muttaqi interacted with 20 students and appeared overwhelmed by the reception he received.

Police manage the crowd as Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi arrives at Darul Uloom Deoband, the Islamic seminary in Saharanpur. REUTERS

Students jostle

Visuals that surfaced on social-media platforms showed students jostling to have a glimpse of the minister, with the police having a tough time keeping them at bay.

Muttaqi met the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, Maulana Arshad Madni, and discussed religious matters related to Islam. Madni later told reporters that politics was not discussed at the meeting.

The Deoband seminary, established in 1866, is considered one of the most prestigious Islamic educational centres in the world.

The Deobandi sect of Islam is followed in several Muslim countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The Darul Uloom Haqqania, which is said to be the school of the Taliban, was set up on the lines of Deoband.

Many prominent Taliban leaders received their education at this institution. Its founder, Maulana Abdul Haq, was a student of the Deoband seminary.

EDITORS GUILD OF INDIA

"While diplomatic premises may claim protection under the Vienna Convention, that cannot justify blatant gender discrimination in press access on Indian soil. Whether or not the MEA coordinated the event, it is deeply troubling that such a discriminatory exclusion was allowed to proceed without objection. The absence of solidarity in pointing this discriminatory practice at the event signals a troubling complacency in our community.

DELHI UNION OF JOURNALISTS

"The deliberate exclusion of women journalists from Muttaqi's press conference seems like tacit consent, if not approval, of the Taliban's blatant discrimination against women.

SC to rule on plea against SIT in Karur stampede tomorrow

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Supreme Court is scheduled to pronounce its order on Monday on a plea challenging the Madras High Court's order setting up an SIT to probe the Karur stampede, which claimed the lives of 41 people and left scores of others injured.

A bench of Justices J K Maheshwari and N V Anjaria will deliver the orders on October 13 on the petitions filed by Tamil actor Vijay's political party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), and others.

On October 10, while reserving its order, the court questioned the Madras High Court's order setting up SIT led by senior IPS officer Asra Garg, to probe stampede.

The court flagged the HC's two seemingly conflicting orders in connection with the matter, one declining a plea for a CBI probe, which was passed by the Madurai bench, and another directing a probe by a special investigation team, passed by principal bench.

'Probe against Coldrif maker exposed lapses by TN drug body'

NEW DELHI, PTI: The investigation against the Kanchipuram-based manufacturer of Coldrif cough syrup, linked to the deaths of children in Madhya Pradesh, has brought to light lapses by the Tamil Nadu Food and Drug Administration in enforcing basic regulatory norms, CDSCO sources said.

Licensed in 2011 by the Tamil Nadu Food and Drug Administration (TNFDA), Sresan Pharma continued operations unchecked for over a decade despite its dismal infrastructure and multiple violations of national drug safety rules, they said.

A recent inspection by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) exposed the unit's appalling conditions and total non-compliance with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), the sources said.

"The CDSCO has not been involved in any of the audits at Sresan Pharma. Since the CDSCO was not involved and the state Food and Drug Administration did not inform the CDSCO about this company in any way, this company was not part of any of the CDSCO databases," a source said.

TNFDA officials could not be reached for comment.

Another source at the CDSCO highlighted that Rule 84AB of D and C Rules requires manufacturers to update all of their approved products on the 'Sugam' portal.

The rule was notified to prepare a national database of all the approved products in the country to support better monitoring.

"The company did not register its products on the database. Thus, it did not comply with this rule. It is the state regulator's responsibility to get the rule executed in the state," the source said.

Search operation ends as bodies of missing soldiers recovered in Kokernag forests of J&K

SRINAGAR, DHNS: Security forces on Saturday concluded a five-day search operation in the dense Gadole forest area of Kokernag in south Kashmir's Anantnag district after recovering the bodies of two Indian Army soldiers who went missing during a counter-terror operation earlier this week.

The soldiers, Lance Havildar Palash Ghosh and Lance Naik Sujay Ghosh, were part of a paratrooper unit engaged in tracking and neutralising terrorists hiding in the Kishtwar forests. They went missing five days ago, coinciding with a sudden snowstorm that severely hampered visibility and movement in the rugged, forested terrain.

The two soldiers, part of the Army's elite para unit, had gone missing during a combing operation in Kokernag earlier this week. The body of one soldier was recovered on Thursday, while another was found on Saturday, officials said, adding that it seems both died due to hypothermia.

The body of the first soldier was recovered on Thursday, while the second was found on Saturday. A security official said the recovery marked the end of a painstaking operation involving ground troops, local support teams, and coordinated search efforts across the challenging landscape.

Paying tribute to the fallen soldiers, Chinar Corps said it honours the supreme sacrifice of the two while conducting relentless counter terror operations in the Kishtwar Range of Kokernag battling extreme weather conditions.

The incident highlights the operational risks faced by security forces in J&K, where terrorists exploit dense forests, high-altitude terrain, and adverse weather conditions to evade capture. Despite high-tech surveillance and intelligence inputs, such operations carry a constant risk to personnel, particularly when troops are deployed in remote areas immediately after natural events like snowstorms.

'SOCIAL JUSTICE'

TN to remove caste names from public spaces

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
CHENNAI, DHNS

As many as 12,480 rural local bodies in Tamil Nadu on Saturday passed resolutions to remove caste-based names from residential areas, streets, public spaces, and waterbodies, and rename them with appropriate names.

Chief Minister M K Stalin, who chaired the meetings virtually, stressed that grama sabha meetings are fundamental to grassroots democracy and asked the panchayats to ensure that schemes are formulated with a focus on social justice and equality.

Connecting with villagers through video conferencing, Stalin also interacted with people from five village panchayats in Chengalpattu, Tenkasi, Madurai, Villupuram, and Thanjavur districts. Stalin told the villagers that he was the first chief minister in the state to participate in grama sabha meetings and interact with people.

Contending that the Dravidian Model government led by him is working to establish social justice and equality, Stalin said steps are being taken to rename streets and areas with caste-based names that carry a derogatory connotation and replace them with neutral names.

"Furthermore, under the 'Namma Ooru, Namma Arasu' (Our Village, Our Government) scheme, people should identify three critical needs of their villages, and pass resolutions. The district administration must ensure that these identified needs are fulfilled immediately," Stalin said.

The scheme to rename streets and areas with caste-based names has come under criticism after the government released a list of alternative names in which leaders from Dalit and other oppressed communities are absent. Moreover, the government recently named a new 10.10-km flyover in Coimbatore after scientist G D Naidu.

Speaking about the Thayumanavar scheme, measures are being taken to enhance the welfare of women and children. "While our government is implementing all these schemes and initiatives, citizens should help take our villages to the next level. We must ensure that children in every household are educated. If anyone employs child labourers, they should be rescued," he added.

IT Minister P T R Palanivel Thiaga Rajan said the video conferencing was a new milestone in Tamil Nadu's internet revolution as over 11,800 village panchayats across the state have now been connected via Optical Fiber Cable (OFC) as a result of the efforts initiated in 2022.

ED arrests Reliance Power CFO in 'fake' bank guarantee case

NEW DELHI, PTI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested the executive director and CFO of industrialist Anil Ambani's group company, Reliance Power, in a money laundering case linked to the issuance of an alleged fake bank guarantee of Rs 68 crore, official sources said on Saturday.

The Chief Financial Officer, Ashok Kumar Pal, was taken into custody on Friday night under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) after he was questioned by the agency, the sources said.

VICTORY IN FAILURE

Belated state Congress appointments have Hooda's approval

Poll debacles no threat to Hooda's position in Haryana

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Bhupinder Singh Hooda has managed one thing that Congress satraps Ashok Gehlot, Bhupesh Baghel and Kamal Nath could not do in the recent past — to continue as the Leader of the Opposition even after a hattrick of electoral setbacks in Haryana.

Factionalism and one-upmanship had cost governments for Gehlot in Rajasthan, Baghel in Chhattisgarh and Kamal Nath in Madhya Pradesh in late 2023 and they paid the price with a diminished say in their state units, though not relegated to the margins.

These three leaders did not lose like Hooda, yet they could not convince the high command to appoint their loyalists in key posts in the state units.

On the other hand, the Jat strongman ensured that only a man of his approval – Rao Narender Singh, a former minister who lost the last three Assembly polls – became the state president.

Even though he was a compromise candidate of his present detractors when they all ganged up against Bhajan Lal to deny him chief ministership in 2005, Hooda has since then consolidated his grip.

This is despite his inability to win a majority for Congress on its own in 2009, when defections helped the party form a government, or later.

After the Haryana electoral debacle in October last year, it took 11 months and 20 days for the Congress to select a Legislature Party Leader, who will become the LoP, and a new state president, as Hooda's detractors saw a window of opportunity to clip his wings in a state where he has been the last word for Congress for two decades now.

Within 24 hours of the results that restricted Congress to 37 seats in the Assembly of 90 and gave the BJP a decisive majority, Hooda made the first move to pre-empt his opponents — around 30 of the 37 Congress MLAs assembled "informally" at his Delhi residence to send a message to the leadership against any "misadventure".

Even before the elections, Hooda had ensured that he would have enough support in the legislature party by restricting the number of candidates favoured by his in-house opponents.

Hooda ran a campaign, sidelining leaders like Kumari Selja, a Dalit, Randeep Singh Surjewala and Birender Singh, both Jats, and Captain Ajay Yadav, an OBC. The voting day saw consolidation of non-Jats against the Congress and the results were there to see.

Having "snatched defeat from the jaws of victory", as a senior Congress leader put it, the party appeared headed for an overhaul after the Assembly polls but it wasn't easy.

Since 2007, the Haryana Congress unit has been headed by a Dalit.

Phoolchand Mallana had succeeded Bhajan Lal in 2007 while Ashok Tanwar replaced him in 2014. Selja assumed the presidency in 2019 only to be replaced by Udai Bhan, a Hooda loyalist, in 2022. All these years, Hooda, a Jat, headed the legislature party.

Hooda ensured he would have enough support by restricting the candidates favoured by in-house opponents. PTI FILE

The eight years when Tanwar and Selja helmed the party in Haryana, Hooda played the non-cooperation card, making it difficult for them to function even as he failed to get Jat voters back to the Congress fold.

In recent times, the party has been looking at a new caste combination, with the leadership moving away from Jat-Dalit to Jat-OBC.

The new thinking aligns with Rahul Gandhi's social justice plank with a focus on OBCs, who account for 28.3% of Haryana's population as per the 2011 Census, though unofficial projections now put it at around 40%. Jats constitute 25% and Dalits 20.17% in the state.

The rival BJP had set the template in 2014 by choosing a Brahmin, ML Khattar, to be chief minister and replacing him with an OBC, Nayab Singh Saini. Now, the Congress had to follow suit, but it could not ignore Hooda.

Months of skillful negotiations by the party's state incharge BK Hariprasad finally led to a settlement that made most of them happy. The Congress leadership cleared Hooda as legislature party leader and Rao Narender Singh, an OBC Yadav, as state president.

By choosing Narender Singh, the party has decided to replace its Jat-Dalit formula with the Jat-OBC mix. Congress sources said the choice of Singh will also counter the BJP's playbook of choosing OBC leader Saini as the CM.

From Surjewala to Selja to Birender Singh, all welcomed the new state president but Captain Ajay Yadav felt otherwise, as he raked up a corruption case against the new chief.

Compared to other contenders such as Chiranjeev Rao, son of Ajay Yadav, and Rao Dham Singh, Narender Singh is considered "closer" to Hooda and "more neutral" in party affairs.

While some see the appointments as having a Hooda stamp, a section in the party believes it has also sent a message for the veteran Haryanvi.

This section points to the delay in clearing Hooda's name, claiming that the party was signalling that it is unwilling to play fully to his tunes.

What works in favour of Hooda is that he has systematically stymied competition against him and ran the party without a grassroots organisation, which has been electorally disastrous for the Congress.

The party couldn't wish him away, as he remained the only leader with resources to run the party amid his growing stature in his community.

The question now is what tricks Hooda has up his sleeves, which he did not have in the past 10 years, to bring the Congress back to power in Haryana and to ensure that his son, Deepender Hooda, an MP, takes up his place.

T'gana may move SC over BC quota

S N V SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS

The Telangana government is likely to approach the Supreme Court to challenge the high court's interim order staying a Government Order (GO) that sought to provide 42% reservations to the BCs in local bodies, as well as the subsequent notification for local-body elections.

Buttembare Madhav Reddy and Samudrala Ramesh challenged the GO, arguing before the HC that the move violated the Supreme Court's 50% ceiling on total reservations.

Under GO No 9, the BC quota was raised from 24% to 42%, alongside 15% for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and 10% for Scheduled Tribes (STs), pushing the overall quota to 67%.

Following the SEC's earlier schedule, nominations for the first phase of elections to Mandal and Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituencies (MPTCs and ZPTCs) were to begin on Thursday, with polling scheduled on October 23.

However, after the HC's stay order, the SEC withdrew the poll notification.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy held a virtual meeting on Friday night with Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president and MLC B Mahesh Kumar Goud, All-India Congress Committee in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan, deputy CM Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, BC Welfare Minister Ponnam Prabhakar, and advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi — to deliberate on legal options.

According to sources, the CM reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring 42% reservation for BCs and emphasised that the most appropriate course of action would be to move the Supreme Court against the high court order.

Medical student from Odisha 'gang-raped' in Bengal

KOLKATA/BHUBANESWAR, PTI: A student from Odisha, studying at a private medical college in West Bengal's Paschim Bardhaman district, was raped allegedly by three men, prompting the opposition to slam the TMC government over law and order in the state.

The police launched an investigation after the victim's parents lodged an FIR, but no arrests had been made till the filing of this report.

The survivor is undergoing treatment at the college hospital and gave her statement to the police, an officer said.

The incident occurred outside the private medical college campus in Durgapur on Friday night when the second-year student went out with a friend to fetch some food, a police officer said.

"On the basis of a complaint lodged by her family members, we have started an investigation. We have interrogated her friend who had accompanied her off the college campus," he said, adding that some locals have identified the accused and raids are being conducted in search of them.

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi urged his West Bengal counterpart, Mamata Banerjee, to take swift action against the perpetrators. A team of officers from Odisha will visit Durgapur to provide support to the family members of the victim.

The BJP of both Odisha and West Bengal demanded immediate arrest of the culprits, while the Trinamool Congress said such crimes should not be "politicised".

Tejashwi will face Rahul's Amethi fate: Kishor

Suspense continues over Jan Suraaj leader's candidature

ABHAY KUMAR
PATNA

Jan Suraaj Party chief Prashant Kishor (left) during an election campaign meeting in Vaishali on Saturday. PTI

Jan Suraaj founder Prashant Kishor on Saturday said Opposition leader Tejashwi Yadav would meet the same fate in Raghopur seat, an RJD bastion, as Rahul Gandhi faced in Amethi, which he lost in 2019.

Kishor sounded the poll bugle on Saturday from Vaishali district's Raghopur Assembly seat, which RJD chief Lalu Prasad represented twice and his wife Rabri Devi thrice.

"Both Lalu and Rabri served as Bihar CM after winning from Raghopur. Tejashwi, too, won from Raghopur in 2015 and 2020 and served as Bihar's deputy chief minister twice. Still, there is no answer, why Raghopur has not developed despite being a VVIP constituency," said Kishor.

Taking feedback

The poll strategist-turned-politician said he would convene a meeting of local leaders in Raghopur on Sunday and get feedback on who would be the best candidate to take Tejashwi head-on.

"If I contest from Raghopur, Tejashwi will have to flee from here and contest from another seat as well, just as Rahul Gandhi had to contest from Wayanad during the 2019 Parliamentary polls, besides Amethi," said PK, refusing to confirm whether he will be the Jan Suraaj nominee against Tejashwi from Raghopur.

Suspense over his candidature in the Assembly polls remains, as he did not feature in the first list of its 51 candidates released by Jan Suraaj. "It's up to the party's central committee to decide whether I should throw my hat in the ring or not," said Kishor, who has decided to field candidates in all the 243 constituencies.

Jan Suraaj is the only party that has announced candidates for the first phase of the election, which is slated for November 6.

The second and last phase of the poll will take place on November 11. Counting of votes for the 243 seats is scheduled for November 14.

Won't contest: Bhojpuri actor

Bhojpuri actor Pawan Singh on Saturday announced that he would not contest the upcoming Assembly polls in Bihar and said he would continue to remain as a "soldier" of the BJP, reports PTI.

His announcement comes as speculations are rife that Singh may contest the polls on a BJP ticket from one of the seven Assembly seats of Bhojpur district, preferably from the Ara or Barhara seats, after he recently met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM) chief and Rajya Sabha member Upendra Kushwaha.

In a post on X, Singh wrote, "I, Pawan Singh, want to inform my Bhojpuri community that I did not join the party (BJP) to contest the Bihar assembly elections...nor do I want to contest the assembly elections. I am a true soldier of the party and will remain so."

AIMIM to contest 100 seats

The AIMIM, which has been spurned by the I.N.D.I.A bloc in Bihar, on Saturday said it was planning to contest around 100 seats in the upcoming state assembly polls, five times the number it had fought in the last elections, reports PTI from Bihar.

The party, headed by Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi, claimed that it was aiming to build a "third alternative" in Bihar, where politics has, for years, been all about the BJP-led NDA and the Congress-RJD combine.

AIMIM's state president Akhtarul Iman said, "Our plan is to contest 100 seats. Both the NDA and the 'Mahagathbandhan' (the name by which the I.N.D.I.A bloc is known in Bihar) will be forced to realise our presence."

NDA holds crucial seat-sharing talks

AMRITA MADHUKALYA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Amid reports of disagreements among coalition partners, a high-stakes NDA meeting was held in Delhi on Saturday to finalise seat-sharing arrangements for the Bihar assembly elections.

This came a day ahead of the expected meeting of the Central Election Committee of the party, which includes Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other senior leaders, to finalise the names of the party candidates for the polls.

BIHAR VOTES

Senior BJP leaders, including Home Minister Amit Shah and party president J P Nadda, were present in the meeting.

Bihar unit chief Dilip Jaiswal indicated that seat-sharing arrangements will be announced by Sunday.

HAM leader Jitan Ram Manjhi reportedly expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed allocation, feeling the offer fell short of his expectation.

Chirag Paswan of LJP (RV) had initially demanded 40 seats, but later bought down his demand.

Amid these demands, senior BJP leaders mediated to keep the alliance from fracturing.

JD(U) and BJP are likely to contest in over 100 seats each in the 243-member assembly.

As per sources, Chirag Paswan could be given 26 seats, Jitan Ram Manjhi 8, and Upendra Kushwaha 7.

While the BJP ceded to Chirag's demands for the number of seats, they refused to give up Brahmpur seat he had asked for.

Chirag had also asked for the Govindganj seat, which the BJP gave him. The other partners are unhappy with the move, added the sources.

After the meeting, Dilip Jaiswal said, "Everything is fine within the NDA and a formal announcement will be made soon."

ADR denies filing false affidavit in apex court

NEW DELHI, PTI: Poll rights body Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) denied allegations on Saturday that it filed a false affidavit in the Supreme Court, clarifying that the document in question was never formally submitted but merely "tendered across the bar" in response to a query from the bench.

The clarification came a day after media reports cited comments made by the Election Commission's (EC) lawyer during an SC hearing, suggesting that the affidavit contained inaccuracies and that the voter mentioned did not exist in the electoral roll.

"All the above facts are correct, as can be checked on the ECI website. Thus, the assertion by ECI counsel that the said voter does not exist or that the EPIC belongs to some other individual is incorrect and misleading. In fact, ECI could have and would have easily checked these details through his EPIC number; instead, they asserted that he was a fake voter," it said.

Ajit Pawar slams MLA for 'shop from Hindus' remark

MUMBAI, DHNS: Days after Ajit Pawar-led NCP reiterated the ideology of 'Shiv-Shahu-Phule-Ambedkar' at a session in Nagpur, an MLA of his party stirred controversy by asking people to do Deepavali shopping from shops and establishments owned by Hindus.

"I am requesting all of you... please note... It's our money, our purchases...during Deepavali... ensure that you purchase from Hindus," party MLA Sangram Jagtap said at a public meeting.

His speech has rattled Pawar, NCP national president. "This statement (by Jagtap) is completely wrong. ...no MLA should make such remarks. This is not acceptable to the party," Pawar said.

SEAT STANDOFF

Shaky NC-Congress alliance in J&K faces Rajya Sabha test

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

The upcoming Rajya Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir, scheduled to fill all four seats vacant since 2021, are emerging as a litmus test for the year-old alliance between the National Conference (NC) and the Congress, with reports of a 'deadlock' over seat-sharing arrangements threatening to strain ties.

Sources close to the developments said the NC has offered its alliance partner a "risky" seat in the elections, while the Congress is pressing for one of the three relatively safer seats. "Talks between the leadership of both parties are still underway. If the NC does not concede a safer seat, Congress may opt to stay away from the contest," said a source.

The stakes are high, as the BJP holds a clear advantage on the fourth seat, making the decision over the 'risky' seat crucial. The ruling alliance is expected to comfortably win three seats, while the BJP, with 28 votes, remains well-positioned to capture the fourth.

On Friday, the NC announced the candidature of Choudhary Muhammad Ramzan, Sajad Kichloo, and Shammi Oberoi for the polls. However, the fourth seat, where the NC has offered the Congress candidate, remains contentious.

Analysts say the current standoff reflects the fragile nature of the NC-Congress partnership. Last October, the Congress had opted out from the NC-led government under Omar Abdullah after seeking two ministries but being offered only one. The alliance, despite winning 49 of 90 Assembly seats, saw Congress secure just six of the 39 seats it contested, performing poorly in the Jammu region, where it was expected to challenge the BJP directly.

Political observers suggest that if the NC persists with offering the risky seat, the Congress could either reluctantly field its candidate or stay out of the contest entirely. "A decision to sit out could signal cracks in the alliance," said a senior political analyst.

ED issued summons to Kerala CM's son in 2023, say reports

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

In a significant development, it has been reported that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had summoned Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's son, Vivek Kiran, in connection with a money-laundering case in 2023.

According to some media reports, the summons was issued in connection with the alleged money laundering associated with an UAE agency funded housing complex construction under the state's LIFE Mission project.

The summons issued by the ED zonal office in Kochi to 'Vivek Kiran, S/o Pinarayi Vijayan, Cliff House, TVM' has now come out. He was asked to appear at the ED office in Kochi on February 14, 2023, with bank account details and details of his assets, as well as those of his family members. But Vivek, who is abroad, reportedly did not turn up and there was no information about any further action from ED against him.

Pinarayi Vijayan

Congress alleged that further actions against Vijayan's son were put off as part of the CPM-BJP nexus.

The bribery allegations over the UAE agency funded housing project surfaced close on the heels of the UAE gold smuggling row, in which the chief minister's staff were also allegedly involved.

Over Rs 4 crore was allegedly given as a bribe to some officials at the CMO and the UAE consulate for awarding the work of the UAE Red Crescent-funded project at Wadakancherry in Thrissur to Unitac Builders.

The CM has not reacted to the reports so far. However, General Education Minister V Sivankutty said, if it were a serious case, the ED would have taken further steps.

AICC general secretary K C Venugopal and Congress senior leader Ramesh Chennithala said that the CPM - BJP nexus came to light with the ED's inaction on the summons.

The ED had earlier initiated a probe against Vijayan's daughter Veena T in connection with the huge payments received by her as well as her Bengaluru-based IT firm from a controversial mining firm in Kerala.

Anthropic co-founder meets Modi

BENGALURU, DHNS: Anthropic CEO and co-founder Dario Amodei on Saturday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi to discuss India's role in shaping the future of responsible AI.

The meeting follows Anthropic's announcement to expand to India with a new Bengaluru office. The AI research and development company plans to hire local talent and work with Indian businesses, nonprofits, and startups to apply AI in areas such as education, agriculture, and healthcare.

The company said Claude Code, Anthropic's agentic command line tool, is available to Indian developers seeking to accelerate their development workflows through natural language commands in the terminal.

UNDER PRESSURE Macron faces deadlock as national debt and political turmoil mount

French political crisis could threaten Eurozone stability

GULSHAN SACHDEVA

France is in the midst of a profound political crisis that could have serious repercussions for the European Union's second-largest economy. On Friday, following consultations with all major political parties—excluding the far-right National Rally and the hard-left France Unbound—President Emmanuel Macron once again asked Sebastien Lecornu, who had resigned only days earlier, to return as Prime Minister. Lecornu has barely completed a month in office. He was appointed after the governments of EU veteran Michel Barnier and Macron's close ally François Bayrou collapsed over the past year.

The French political drama is unlikely to end soon. There has been a breakdown of effective governance since the 2024 snap parliamentary elections, which were called to secure a clear majority after Macron's party suffered a humiliating defeat in the European Parliament to the National Rally. The far-right party won 31% of the vote compared with the President's centrist liberal party's 15%. Instead, the snap polls produced a hung parliament, with no bloc securing a majority. Deep ideological divisions have made cooperation nearly impossible.

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen commented that "the joke has gone on for long enough. No one's laughing anymore." On Lecornu's reappointment, France Unbound co-president Jean-Luc Mélenchon remarked, "Macron can do nothing other than be Macron." National Rally President Jordan Bardella called "Lecornu II" a "bad joke, a democratic disgrace and a humiliation for the French people." Several political figures have already announced plans to vote down the new government.

Parties across the spectrum, including the far right, are urging Macron to call fresh elections or even step down. However, he is avoiding new polls, fearing they could further weaken his centrist Renaissance party while strengthening the National Rally or the left-wing alliance.

France's semi-presidential system allows citizens to elect both the Parliament and the President separately, with the President appointing the Prime Minister. Typically, both belong to the same political bloc. Yet, there have been periods of "cohabitation," when the President and Parliament come from opposing factions. In the 1990s, President Jacques Chirac governed alongside a socialist-led parliament for five years. During such times, presidential powers over domestic affairs are limited. Macron has long sought to avoid this scenario but now appears to be running out of options. In the process, both the far right and, unexpectedly, the left have gained ground.

Economically, the outlook is worrying. In 2024, France's fiscal deficit rose to 5.8% of GDP, while national debt climbed to 114%—the third-highest in the Eurozone after Greece and Italy. The Eurozone average stands at about 88%, with Germany near 60%. France carries a €3.4 trillion sovereign debt and spends roughly €67 billion annually on interest payments. Since Eurozone fiscal rules cap deficits at 3% of GDP and public debt at 60%, the French government is under pressure to reduce spending. Parliament, however, has repeatedly refused to approve austerity measures.

Cutting expenditure is politically fraught. French citizens are used to generous welfare benefits, and the government faces additional demands from the war in Ukraine, US President Donald Trump's call for higher defence spending, the green energy transition, and efforts to improve competitiveness. Bayrou's earlier proposal to cut spending by €44 billion was rejected by Parliament. Economists warn that while Greece's debt once shook the Eurozone, a French default would trigger far graver consequences. For now, France can still borrow to service its debt, but prolonged political turmoil could erode market confidence. The French Central Bank chief has acknowledged that political uncertainty is already shaving 0.2 percentage points off economic growth but insists the economy remains stable.

France's President Emmanuel Macron (left) and Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu during the Bastille Day military parade in Paris. AFP FILE

Lecornu, accepting reappointment "out of duty," has pledged to present a budget by year's end. Restoring public finances, he said, remains essential "for our future and for sovereignty." He urged political parties to act responsibly and cautioned ministers to set aside personal ambitions for the 2027 presidential race. "All ambitions are legitimate and useful," he said, "but those who join the government must commit to setting aside presidential ambitions for 2027."

The ongoing political paralysis and looming economic pressures threaten both France's stability and Macron's broader ambitions to lead Europe. After Germany's Angela Merkel stepped down, Macron sought to position France at the centre of European leadership. Yet his weakening domestic authority risks undermining that vision.

Despite being part of the transatlantic alliance, France's foreign policy has traditionally emphasised national identity and strategic independence. Macron has been a vocal advocate of "strategic autonomy" and "European sovereignty." However, relations with Washington have soured under Trump's second administration, marked by tariff disputes and direct US-Russia talks over Ukraine that bypass Europe. As discussions intensify in Europe over developing independent defence and strategic capabilities, Macron's political troubles could not have come at a worse time. What could have been his moment to lead is instead exposing his vulnerabilities.

Meanwhile, the far-right National Rally continues to gain momentum with each political crisis, reflecting the decline of France's traditional parties. The party is now widely seen as a frontrunner for the 2027 presidential election, in which Macron cannot stand again due to the two-term limit. The long-standing "cordon sanitaire", under which mainstream parties unite to block the far right in the second round, may no longer work in a deeply fragmented political landscape.

(Prof Gulshan Sachdeva is Jean Monnet Chair at the Centre for European Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University)

Disarmament is out of question: Hamas official

Key hurdles remain as Trump's Gaza peace plan enters critical phase

DOHA/JERUSALEM, AFP

People gather to celebrate the agreement signed between Israel and Hamas in Tel Aviv on Saturday. AFP

Hamas's disarmament as part of US President Donald Trump's peace plan for Gaza is "out of the question," a Hamas official told AFP on Saturday, as Israel began transferring prisoners ahead of a planned hostage exchange under the ceasefire agreement.

"The proposed weapons handover is out of the question and not negotiable," the Hamas official said, rejecting one of the central components of Trump's 20-point peace plan.

The US president has indicated that the issue of Hamas surrendering its weapons would be addressed in the second phase of the plan, which promises amnesty to Hamas members who decommission their weapons and allows them to leave Gaza.

The statement from Hamas came as a fragile ceasefire continues to hold ahead of Monday's 72-hour deadline for the release of Israeli hostages held since the militant group's October 7, 2023, attacks.

In Jerusalem, the Israeli prison service announced that it had begun transferring prisoners to two jails in preparation for their release as part of the ceasefire deal aimed at freeing hostages held by Hamas.

Under the truce deal, Israel is to release 250 prisoners. In return, Hamas has until Monday to hand over its 48 remaining Israeli hostages — both living and dead.

Hamas to skip event

Trump is set to visit Israel and Egypt in a bid to seal the formal deal between Israel and Hamas. However, a Hamas official said the group would not take part in the formal signing in Egypt. "The matter of the official signing — we will not be involved," political bureau member Hossam Badran said, adding that Hamas "acted principally through... Qatari and Egyptian mediators" during ceasefire talks in Egypt.

Pentagon to build training facility for Qatari pilots in Idaho

WASHINGTON, AP/PTI: The US military is moving forward with plans to build a dedicated facility in Idaho to train pilots from Qatar, an important US ally in the Middle East, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth announced on Friday.

Hegseth, who made the announcement during a visit by Qatar's defence minister, said the facility to be built at the Mountain Home Air Force Base would "host a contingent of Qatari F-15s and pilots to enhance our combined training, increase the lethality, interoperability."

The arrangement is not unusual. Pentagon officials noted that similar facilities have been set up for other allies for decades, and the Idaho base already hosts a fighter squadron from Singapore.

But the news drew a sharp rebuke from close Trump ally and right-wing influencer Laura Loomer, who called the plan "an abomination" and accused the Qataris of being associated with Islamic terror organisations.

Trump threatens 100% tariffs on Chinese goods

NYT NEWS SERVICE

US President Donald Trump on Friday said he would impose a 100% tariff on all products from China in response to curbs Beijing announced this week on rare-earth minerals, a rapid escalation of tensions between the world's largest economies.

On Truth Social, Trump wrote that the tariffs would take effect Nov. 1 and be imposed "over and above" other tariffs on Chinese exports, which are already 30% and in some cases much higher. The United States would also put export controls on critical software, he said.

In an earlier post Friday, the president threatened to retaliate and cancel a planned meeting with China's leader, Xi Jinping.

Trump called the curbs that China put out this week on its exports of rare-earth minerals "sinister and hostile" and said they would "make life difficult for virtually every Country in the World." He added that he had planned to meet Xi in two weeks at an international economic conference in South Korea, "but now there seems to be no reason to do so."

Markets shuddered at the developments — the S&P 500 index sliding more than 2% Friday.

Speaking Friday evening, the president suggested that the tariffs could be walked back before the Nov. 1 deadline and that he would not necessarily cancel his planned meeting with Xi. "We'll see what happens," Trump said. He called China's move "very, very bad."

Rare-earth minerals, which are vital for making an array of products including motors, brakes, semiconductors and fighter jets, have been at the center of tensions between the United States and China this year. Trump has also placed extreme tariffs on Chinese exports before, only to walk them back.

2 dead after shooting on US school campus in Mississippi

LELAND (US), AP/PTI: Police in a small Mississippi town are investigating a shooting during the school's homecoming weekend that left two people dead.

Both were killed on the school campus Friday night, Heidelberg Police Chief Cornell White said. He declined to say whether the victims were students or provide other information about the crimes.

"Right now we've still got a subject at large, but I can't give specifics," White said Saturday morning. An 18-year-old man is being sought for questioning in the shooting, the Jasper County Sheriff's Office said in a statement. The sheriff asked that anyone with information contact the police chief or the sheriff's office.

The shootings happened on the school campus where the Heidelberg Oilers were playing their homecoming football game on Friday night, but it wasn't clear exactly when the gunfire occurred or how close it was to the stadium. White said he was at the scene investigating, and that more information might be released in the coming days.

Biden is receiving radiation, hormone therapy to treat his prostate cancer

WASHINGTON, AP/PTI: Former President Joe Biden is receiving radiation and hormone therapy as part of a new phase of treating the aggressive form of prostate cancer he was diagnosed with after leaving office, a spokesperson said on Saturday.

Jeo Biden

"As part of a treatment plan for prostate cancer, President Biden is currently undergoing radiation therapy and hormone treatment," said Biden aide Kelly Scully.

The 82-year-old Democrat left office in January after he had dropped his reelection bid six months earlier following a disastrous debate against Republican Donald Trump amid concerns about Biden's age, health and mental fitness. Trump defeated Democrat Kamala Harris, who was Biden's vice president. In May, Biden's postpresidential office announced that he had been diagnosed with prostate cancer and that it had spread to his bones. The discovery came after he reported urinary symptoms.

Prostate cancers are graded for aggressiveness using what is known as a Gleason score. The scores range from 6 to 10, with 8, 9 and 10 prostate cancers behaving more aggressively. Biden's office said his score was 9, suggesting his cancer is among the most aggressive.

Sudanese paramilitaries kills 53

CAIRO, AP/PTI: At least 53 people were killed in an attack by Sudanese paramilitaries that hit a shelter in a besieged Darfur city, a doctors' group said Saturday.

The Sudan Doctors' Network said the shelling attack on the city of el-Fasher also wounded another 21 people. The attack by the Rapid Support Forces hit the al-Arqam Home, which sheltered displaced families in el-Fasher.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

Protesters celebrate atop a vandalised police armoured vehicle in Antananarivo on Saturday. AFP

Madagascar soldiers join youth-led demonstration in Antananarivo

▸ Soldiers joined thousands of anti-government demonstrators in Madagascar on Saturday, calling on security forces to "refuse orders to shoot" and condemning police action to quell over two weeks of protests that have rocked the Indian Ocean island, AFP reports from Antananarivo.

The youth-led demonstration in the capital, Antananarivo, was one of the biggest since the protest movement erupted on September 25, sparked by anger over power and water shortages and led President Andry Rajoelina to sack his government. Police used stun grenades and tear gas to try to disperse the large crowds but left as soldiers from the CAPSAT contingent of administrative and technical officers rode into the city on army vehicles to join the demonstrators. They were welcomed with cheers from protesters who called out "Thank you!" to the uniformed troops, some waving Madagascar flags.

The departure of the police and other security forces opened the way for the crowds to reach the symbolic Place du 13 Mai in front of Antananarivo's city hall. CAPSAT Colonel Michael Randrianirina told AFP at the site that police had shot at the soldiers as they passed barracks, hitting one and a journalist. "The journalist was hit in the buttock, while the soldier died," he said.

B'desh court to indict 4 Indians

▸ A court in Bangladesh is set to indict a pregnant Indian woman and three others on charges of entering the country illegally, a move that could pave the way for their repatriation months after they were reportedly pushed in by Indian law enforcement agencies suspecting them of being Bangladeshi nationals, PTI reports from Dhaka.

"Senior judicial magistrate Ashraful Haque has set October 23 for the hearing on charge framing against Sonali Khatun and the three others, alongside two infants. They have been languishing in jail for the past four months," Chief Public Prosecutor (northwestern) Chapai Nawabganj M Abdul Wadud told PTI. Wadud said if they plead guilty to the charges during the hearing, it would pave the way for their repatriation.

A Gravity-1 rocket lifts off from a ship off the coast of Haiyang in China's Shandong province on Saturday. The world's largest solid-fuel carrier rocket was making its second launch to place experimental satellites into orbit. AFP

US starts mass firings of workers

▸ The White House budget office said Friday that mass firings of federal workers have started, an attempt by President Donald Trump's administration to exert more pressure on Democratic lawmakers as the government shutdown dragged into a 10th day, AP/PTI reports from Washington.

Russ Vought, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, said on the social media site X that the "RIFs have begun," referring to reduction-in-force plans aimed at reducing the size of the federal government.

A spokesperson for the budget office said the reductions are "substantial" but did not offer more details.

Employees at the departments of Education, Treasury, Homeland Security and Health and Human Services, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency, were set to receive the notices, according to spokespeople for the agencies and union representatives for federal workers.

North Korea displays new missile

▸ At a massive military parade attended by foreign leaders, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un rolled out his nuclear-armed military's most powerful weapons, including a new intercontinental ballistic missile he may be preparing to test in the coming weeks, AP/PTI reports from Seoul.

The parade, which began in the rain Friday night at Pyongyang's main square and marked the 80th anniversary of the founding of the ruling Workers' Party, highlighted Kim's growing diplomatic footing and his relentless drive to build an arsenal that could target the continental US and his rivals in Asia. North Korean state media said Saturday that the parade featured a new, yet-to-be-tested ICBM called the Hwasong-20, which it described as the country's "most powerful nuclear strategic weapon system."

North Koreans celebrate the 80th anniversary of the founding of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea in Pyongyang on Saturday. REUTERS

Rajeshwari stars in Karnataka win

BENGALURU, DHNS: Rajeshwari Gayakwad picked up 4/18 while her teammate Shishira A Gowda scored a 41-ball fifty to help Karnataka women register a nine-wicket win over Tripura in the Senior Women's T20 Trophy in Gwalior on Saturday.

After bowling out Tripura to 97 all out in 20 overs, Karnataka wrapped up the chase in just 12.1 overs, on the back of Shishira's 50 and Vrinda Dinesh's 36.

Brief scores: Tripura: 97 all out in 20 overs (Mouchaity Debnath 30, RR Saha 32; Rajeshwari Gayakwad 4-18, Shreyanka R Patil 2-33) lt to Karnataka: 100/1 in 12.5 overs (Shishira A Gowda 50, Vrinda Dinesh 36).

Knocks in vain

Marakanday Panchal and Bikram Singh Sangha made the headline as Chandigarh beat Karnataka by 38 runs in the Vinoo Mankad Trophy in Dehradun.

Batting first, Panchal (109 not out), Balraj Singh (52) and Meet Dahiya (51) helped Chandigarh post 282 for the loss of six wickets in 50 overs.

In the reply, fifties from Manikanth Shivanand (64) and Anvay Dravid (63) went in vain as Bikram (5/29) starred with the ball to help Chandigarh over the line.

Brief scores: Chandigarh: 282/6 in 50 overs (Balraj Singh 52, Marakanday Panchal 109 n.o., Meet Dahiya 51; Vaibhav Sharma 2-64) bt Karnataka: 244 all out in 45.5 overs (Manikanth Shivanand 64, Anvay Dravid 63, Akshath Prabhakar 29; Bikram Singh Sangha 5-29, Ritik Sandhu 2-58).

IN BRIEF

Jensi stuns top seed Padma

▸ Jensi Kanabar stunned top seed from Karnataka Padma Priya Rameshkumar 6-2, 6-2 to lift the girls' U-14 singles title in the Fenesta Open National Tennis Championship, reports PTI from New Delhi.

Other results (all finals): Boys' U-14: Harsh Marwaha bt Aarav Mulay 6-2, 6-2. **U-16**: Tavish Pahwa bt Mannan Ashok Agarwal 6-2, 6-3.
Girls' U-16 final: Parthsarthi Mundhe bt Shreeniti Chowdhury 6-0, 3-6, 6-4.

Dutch star Bol switches to 800

▸ Dutch track star Femke Bol, the reigning two-time 400-meter hurdles world champion, has announced she will switch events to compete in the 800 meters, reports AP from Amsterdam.

The 25-year-old Bol has won two Olympic bronze medals in the 400m hurdles, and she ran the anchor leg of the 4x400m-mixed relay to capture gold for the Netherlands at the Paris Olympics. Bol also won a silver medal at the Paris Games in the women's 4x400m relay.

India juniors beat GB

▸ Captain Rohit led by example with two goals as Indian junior men's hockey team opened its Sultan of Johor Cup campaign with a 3-2 win over Great Britain, reports PTI from Johor Bahru.

Bose, Ralte join national camp

▸ Senior defender Subhasish Bose and midfielder Lalengmawia Ralte on Saturday joined the Indian football team camp here ahead of the vital second leg match against Singapore in the Asian Cup qualifiers, reports PTI from Margaon.

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

2nd Test: India vs West Indies (day 3, 9:30 am). **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network.**

Women's World Cup: India vs Australia (3 pm). **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network.**

TENNIS

Shanghai Masters: Final (2 pm). **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network.**

FOOTBALL

World Cup Qualifiers: Faroe Islands vs Czechia, Netherlands vs Finland (all 9:30 pm), Denmark vs Greece, Lithuania vs Poland, Romania vs Austria, Croatia vs Gibraltar (all 12:15 am, Monday). **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network.**

CRICKET SECOND TEST

GILL HITS TON as another early finish looms

Fighting WI slip to 140/4 after India declare innings at 518/5

SIDNEY KIRAN
NEW DELHI, DHNS

After India sent the West Indies bowlers on a leather hunt yet again, Shubman Gill made a bold declaration at 518/5 an hour after lunch on the second day itself. Despite plenty of time remaining to collect more personal milestones — sublime Gill was batting on 129 — the skipper decided to unleash his bowlers on the battered visitors in hope of sealing another quick win.

Apart from West Indies batters being in miserable form, Gill and a few other members of the Test team are scheduled to depart for Australia right after the Test for a limited-overs tour of Australia — three ODIs and five T20Is — starting October 19. A couple of extra days at home, especially for Gill who has been playing non-stop cricket since the turn of the year, is priceless. This could have been the logic behind it.

However, West Indies, led by gusty knocks from Alick Athanaze (41) and Tagenarine Chanderpaul (34), caught Gill and the Indian bowlers by surprise with a doughty fightback that brought momentary joy on the faces of the legendary duo of Brian Lara and Viv Richards who were seated in the stands at the Arun Jaitley Stadium. Momentary because both the batters, who exhibited courage that has been conspicuously absent from West Indies cricket for a long time, perished right after promising starts. And, at stumps on the second day of the second Test, the script remained the same, West Indies in trouble at 140/4 — trailing India by massive 378 runs.

Like in the opening Test at Ahmedabad, Indian pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj came charging out of the blocks. Bumrah, who loves bowling to left-handers as his natural delivery shapes away from them, troubled openers John Campbell and Chanderpaul with balls whizzing past their edges constantly. Siraj too teased and tested, but luck, very essential when the chips are down, was with the West Indies openers, and they managed to survive the tough phase.

Gill then quickly summoned his ace spinner Ravindra Jadeja as early as the eighth over, and the left-armer delivered with his second ball, sending Campbell back after the batter's thumping sweep shot stunningly found short-leg fielder Sai Sudharsan. One reckoned a collapse from there, but Athanaze and Chanderpaul took the fight to the Indians. They figured attack is the best form of defence, and they never allowed Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav and Washington Sundar to settle into any sort of rhythm. Both employed the sweep shot to great effect, leaving the Indian spinners scratching their heads in shock.

Despite the counter-attack, the Indians stuck to their guns, knowing one opening was all they needed to rock the ship. And it came in the 28th over, who again but Jadeja at the centre of it. He tossed the ball nicely, drawing Chanderpaul forward, KL Rahul completing a catch at slip to snap the partnership at 66 runs. Athanaze soon joined Chanderpaul in the dressing room, his attempted slog-sweep off Kuldeep lobbing the ball straight to Jadeja at midwicket.

Skipper Roston Chase, who has been at a loss of words to describe the West Indies' repeated failures, lasted a mere seven balls as the West Indies collapsed from 87/2 to 107/4. The Indians, however, couldn't make further inroads, but they'll be confident of mopping things up early on Sunday morning.

Earlier in the day, Gill extended his exceptional year with a superb unbeaten century that showed India's hunger for a massive win. Barring a mix-up with Yashasvi Jaiswal in the second over of the day, Gill was at his elegant best. Along with Nitish Kumar Reddy first and then in the company of Dhruv Jurel, he maintained a high tempo to the innings that allowed them the luxury of making an early declaration.

India's captain Shubman Gill celebrates after scoring his century on the second day of the second and final Test against West Indies in New Delhi on Saturday. AFP

SCOREBOARD

INDIA (I Innings, O/n: 318/2):
Jaiswal (run out) 175 (258b, 22x4)
Rahul st Imlach b Warrican 38 (54b, 5x4, 1x6)
Sudharsan lbw Warrican 87 (165b, 12x4)
Gill (not out) 129 (196b, 16x4, 2x6)
Nitish c Seales b Warrican 43 (54b, 4x4, 2x6)
Jurel b Chase 44 (79b, 5x4)
TOTAL (for 5 wkts decl, 134.2 overs) 518
Fall of wickets: 1-58 (Rahul), 2-251 (Sudharsan), 3-325 (Jaiswal), 4-416 (Nitish), 5-518 (Jurel).
Bowling: Seales 22-2-88-0, Philip 17-2-71-0 (w-1), Greaves 14-1-58-0 (w-1), Pierre 30-2-120-0, Warrican 34-6-98-3, Chase 17.2-0-83-1.
WEST INDIES (I Innings):
Campbell c Sudharsan b Jadeja 10 (25b, 2x4)
Chanderpaul c Rahul b Jadeja 34 (67b, 4x4, 1x6)
Athanaze c Jadeja b Kuldeep 41 (84b, 5x4, 1x6)
Hope (batting) 31 (46b, 5x4)
Chase c&b Jadeja 0 (7b)
Imlach (batting) 14 (31b, 2x4)
Extras (LB-8, NB-2) 10
TOTAL (for 4 wkts, 43 overs) 140
Fall of wickets: 1-21 (Campbell), 2-87 (Chanderpaul), 3-106 (Athanaze), 4-107 (Chase).
Bowling: Bumrah 6-3-18-0, Siraj 4-0-9-0, Jadeja 14-3-37-3 (nb-2), Kuldeep 12-3-45-1, Sundar 7-1-23-0.

I was told the reason I am not in ODIs: Jadeja

SIDNEY KIRAN
NEW DELHI, DHNS

> "I want to play (in ODIs). The captain, selector, coach talked to me. It's not like I was surprised when the team was announced and I'm not in it.

A notable omission from the Indian squad for the one-day leg of the tour to Australia that was announced a week ago was Ravindra Jadeja **(in pic)**. Although chief selector Ajit Agarkar categorically said the 36-year-old is not out of the picture as they build a team for the 2027 World Cup, speculations have arisen that it could probably be the end of the road in the 50-over format for the gun all-rounder.

Jadeja, who was part of the victorious Champions Trophy squad this February-March and has been in exceptional form with both bat and ball in red-ball cricket starting with the England series, said the management has discussed the Australia exclusion with him and is confident of making a return soon.

"It's (selection) not in my hands," said the Test vice-captain in a press conference following the second day's play of the second Test against the West Indies here on Saturday. "I want to play (in ODIs). But at the end of the day, team management, selector, coach and captain know why I'm not in this series. There must be some reason behind it. They've spoken to me also about it. It's not like I was surprised when the team was announced and I'm not in it.

"It's a good thing that the captain, selector, coach talked to me and explained the reason behind it. So I'm happy about it. But whenever I get a chance next, obviously I'll try to do the things I've been doing for so many years. A major tournament like the World Cup, if I get a chance, there are a lot of one-dayers before it, and if I do well in it, it'll be good for Indian cricket. To win a World Cup is everyone's dream, especially 50 overs. Last time we missed out narrowly. This time, if we can, we can complete whatever is left unfinished."

Agarkar, in the press conference following the squad selection in Ahmedabad, had said they didn't pick Jadeja because they couldn't board a team with two left-arm spinners because Kuldeep Yadav and Washington Sundar were chosen as frontline spin options.

"At the moment, we could only carry one (to Australia) and get some balance in the team with Washi and Kuldeep there as well. I don't think we are going to need more than that in Australia. But he is clearly in the scheme of things with how good he is, what he offers us as a batter and a bowler. You can't accommodate everyone. It's nothing more than that," Agarkar said.

After the series against Australia, India are set to host South Africa and New Zealand in three ODIs each. The squad for those series will give an indication of what the management thinks about Jadeja.

Vacherot stuns ailing Djokovic

SHANGHAI, AFP

An ailing Novak Djokovic was knocked out of the Shanghai Masters semifinals on Saturday by world No. 204 Valentin Vacherot, who will face his cousin Arthur Rinderknech in a surprise all-family final.

Vacherot, a 26-year-old qualifier from Monaco, beat Djokovic 6-3, 6-4 to deny him a record-extending fifth title in Shanghai.

He will next face his cousin Rinderknech, the unseeded Frenchman, who came from a set down to oust Daniil Medvedev 4-6, 6-2, 6-4.

"I'm trying to pinch myself, is this real," said Vacherot after the biggest win of his career.

"I have a hundred feelings right now."

Vacherot is the lowest-ranked player to reach an ATP Masters 1000 final since the format's introduction in 1990.

Djokovic, 38, struggled physically throughout the match, throwing up courtside and receiving medical treatment multiple times. The former world No. 1 said Vacherot's unlikely run in the tournament was "an amazing story".

Djokovic, 38, had said after his last match that he was concerned about his physical state, after battling through vomiting bouts, leg injury scares and fatigue throughout the tournament.

World No. 204 Valentin Vacherot defeated 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic in the semifinal of the Shanghai Masters on Saturday. REUTERS

Gauff into final

Coco Gauff survived a battle of wills against Jasmine Paolini to reach the Wuhan Open final for the first time in her career.

The American third seed had lost all three meetings she had with Paolini in 2025 but turned things around with a 6-4, 6-3 victory to book a final showdown with sixth seed Jessica Pegula who knocked out defending champion Aryna Sabalenka.

US' Pegula clawed her way back from 2-5 down in the decider to shock the World No. 1 Belarusian, who has never lost in the tournament, with a dramatic 2-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/2) victory.

Steady Shubhankar makes the cut

MADRID, PTI: India's Shubhankar Sharma carded a steady two-under 69 in the second round to stay around for weekend action at the Open de Espana here.

Sharma's combined 36 hole total of even par saw him to make his first cut in a 72-hole event for the first time since the Hero Indian Open in March 2025.

The 29-year-old, who will be one of India's top challengers next week at the DP World India Championship, is placed T-61 on the leaderboard.

Aditi drops to tied-55

Placed at tied-31 at the halfway mark, India's Aditi Ashok dropped further down to tied-55 after a third round score of two-over 74 at the Buick LPGA Shanghai tournament on Saturday.

The 27-year-old golfer from Bengaluru could manage only one birdie and was hurt by three bogeys on moving day after rounds of 70-70 for a three-day total of two-under 214.

Home hope Hitaashee extends lead, Pranavi is sole third

GURUGRAM, PTI: India's Hitaashee Bakshi registered a third straight under-par round at the Hero Women's Indian Open to open up a three-shot lead after the third round of the tournament here on Saturday.

The only player with three under-par rounds this week, Hitaashee has shot 70-67-70 and is 9-under 207 for 54 holes.

The 21-year-old, who has never finished in the Top-10 of an LET event, is three shots clear of the three-time LET winner England's Alice Hewson (69-72-69), who is at 6-under 210.

Pranavi Urs (72-67-73) is third at 4-under, while rookie Avani Prashanth (73-71-70), who in 2023 was tied-fifth as an amateur, is at tied-fourth.

Alongside Avani are four others, including amateur Zara Anand, who after being 4-over on Saturday through the first six holes, also finished at 4-over to stay in the hunt.

Pranavi, who was 5-under and tied-fourth after the second day, shot 73 but still moved up to sole third.

Avani, tied-14th after day 2, shot 2-under 70 to move up to tied-fourth.

There were more Indians close by as Vani Kapoor, the first-round leader, shot 74 and was tied-ninth at 1-under 215 and Amandeep Drall (72) was T-12 at even par 216.

Of the dozen Indians who made the cut, six were in Top-12, while the others were Ridhima Dilawari (76) and Durga Nittur (78) at T-43, Jahanvi Bakshi (79) and Jasmine Shekar (79) at T-55, Tvesa Malik (79) at T-60 and Diksha Dagar (79) at T-63rd.

Hitaashee Bakshi

Namibia shock SA in T20I

WINDHOEK, AFP: A burst of late hitting by wicketkeeper Zane Green took Namibia to a shock win over South Africa in a one-off Twenty20 international on Saturday.

Green, who finished on 30 not out, hit 23 of the 26 runs scored by Namibia in the last two overs of the first international match between the neighbouring African countries.

With 11 needed off the last over, Green hooked the first ball from Andile Simelane for six. With the scores level, he hit the last ball of the match to the midwicket boundary for the winning runs.

The match was arranged to inaugurate the Namibia Cricket Ground, which will be one of the venues for the 2027 Cricket World Cup in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

"You can see what it means, for the team and the crowd," said Namibian captain Gerhard Erasmus after leading his players on a victory lap in front of a capacity crowd. "The guys did it with good skill."

Brief scores: South Africa: 134/8 in 20 overs (Jason Smith 31; Ruben Trumpelmann 3-28, Max Heingo 2-32) lt to Namibia: 138/6 in 20 overs (Zane Green 30 n.o.; Nandre Burger 2-21, Andile Simelane 2-28). **Result:** Namibia won by 4 wickets. **PoM:** Ruben Trumpelmann.

Anmol impresses before bowing out in semifinals

VANTAA, PTI: Rising Indian shuttler Anmol Kharb's **(in pic)** impressive run at the Arctic Open Super 500 badminton tournament ended with a straight-game loss to three-time world champion Akane Yamaguchi here on Saturday.

The 18-year-old from Faridabad, part of India's gold-winning team at the 2024 Asia Team Championships, stayed competitive in the early stages of both the games but Yamaguchi pulled away in the second half to register a comfortable 21-10, 21-13 win in 29 minutes.

Yamaguchi will now take on the winner of the match between two Thai shuttler -- fourth seed Busanan Ongbamrungphan and second seed Ratchanok Intanon.

It was a creditable semifinal finish for Kharb, who outwitted notable top-30 players such as Wen Chi Hsu (No. 32) and sixth seed Lin Hsiang Ti (world No. 21), before defeating Denmark's Amelie Schulz 21-15, 21-14 to reach her first-ever Super 500 semifinal.

A national champion at 16, Kharb produced a spirited performance but struggled to match the experience and craft of Yamaguchi, a former world No. 1.

Kharb had finished runner-up at the Cameroon International earlier this year and also claimed wins at International Challengers in Belgium and Poland.

Mbappe on the money for France

PARIS, AFP

Four-time winners Germany cruised past 10-man Luxembourg and Kylian Mbappe helped France see off Azerbaijan in World Cup qualifying on Friday.

Captain Joshua Kimmich's double inspired Germany to a 4-0 win over Luxembourg and to the top of Group A on goal difference with Slovakia and Northern Ireland, who await them in Belfast on Monday.

Germany showed poise and swagger in their World Cup qualifying campaign, losing away in Slovakia for the first time and edging past Northern Ireland at home.

Germany captain Kimmich converted a first-half penalty and tapped in from close range just after the break.

Kylian Mbappe scored France's first goal in their 3-0 victory over Azerbaijan at the World Cup Qualifiers in Paris. AFP

David Raum's first-half free kick and a Serge Gnabry goal early in the second half secured the Germans an important victory.

Germany were eliminated at the group stage of the World Cup in 2018 and 2022.

Over in Paris, Mbappe's fine form continued at the Parc des Princes when the France captain struck on the stroke of half-time for his 10th goal in successive games for Real Madrid and his country.

Adrien Rabiot and the returning Florian Thauvin were also on the scoresheet as Didier Deschamps's men eased past Azerbaijan 3-0 to remain unbeaten after three games and top of Group D.

Les Bleus will book their passage to the United States, Canada and Mexico next year if they win in Iceland on Monday and Ukraine fail to beat Azerbaijan.

Results: Germany: 4 (Raum 12th, Kimmich 21st pen, 50th, Gnabry 48th) bt Luxembourg: 0; Northern Ireland: 2 (Hrosovsky 18th og, Hume 81st) bt Slovakia: 0; Sweden: 0 lt to Switzerland: 2 (Xhaka 65th pen, Manzambi 90+4th); France: 3 (Mbappe 45+2th, Rabiot 69th, Thauvin 84th) bt Azerbaijan: 0; Iceland: 3 (Ellertsson 35th, Gudmundsson 59th, 75th) lt to Ukraine: 5 (Malinovskyi 14th, 45th+5 Hutsuliak 45th, Kaliuzhnyi 85th, Ocheretko 88th).

Minnows off to winning starts

BHUBANESHWAR, PTI: The 28th ITTF-ATTU Asian Team Table Tennis Championships served off in style as group stage contests went on expected lines here on Saturday.

While top-seeded teams, including hosts India, enjoyed an opening-day rest.

In the men's section, Kazakhstan, in Group A, rested their top paddler Kirill Gerassimenko and still proved too strong for Kyrgyzstan.

Sri Lanka began their campaign on a winning note, comfortably overcoming Kyrgyzstan.

EYE OPENER

India's record-breaking run at Asian Aquatics hides cracks beneath the surface

Splash of reality

Veer Savarkar Sports Complex in Ahmedabad did draw some praise for its high international standard but mere grand structures won't help improve standards of swimming in the country. SFI

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

Congratulations are in order for Indian swimmers, who scripted history at the recently concluded Asian Aquatics Championships in Ahmedabad. With a record haul of 12 medals (four silver and eight bronze), this was India's best-ever showing, surpassing the seven medals they won back in 2009. It wasn't just about the numbers, but also about the confidence this young crop exuded in front of a home crowd.

Bhavya Sachdeva. DH PHOTO

Bengaluru's ace swimmer Srihari Nataraj was the standout performer, grabbing seven medals, including three silver; the most by any Indian at a single Asian meet. Rohit Benediction bagged three medals while Bhavya Sachdeva emerged as the lone woman to feature on the podium. Veterans Sajan Prakash, Kushagra Rawat and Akash Mani chipped in too, helping India finish 11th on the medal table. The results not only made fans proud but also saved the blushes of the organisers hosting the event for the first time.

For the aesthetics, a big share of the credit must go to Ahmedabad, which showcased its world-class infrastructure through the 825-crore Veer Savarkar Sports Complex. The Aquatics Centre, equipped with two world-standard pools built by the same company that installed pools for the Paris Olympics and several World Championships, left athletes and coaches from across Asia visibly impressed.

"The infrastructure is as good as you see anywhere else in the world and took us by surprise too," said Japan's head coach Kazuhiro Ooyanagi. "We were provided with every facility a visiting team could ask for, and the hospitality was admirable too."

That's promising news for Ahmedabad, which is in the middle of an infrastructure revamp after formally submitting its bid for the 2036 Olympics. However, it would be premature to call the Naranpura complex "Olympic ready". Legendary Australian coach Michael Bohl, who was in Ahmedabad as an advisor to China's high-performance centers, offered a more realistic view.

"I think the facility itself has been very good and can hold an Olympic very easily," Bohl said. "The only thing they are lacking is another 50m pool because Olympic standards require two 50m pools."

Beyond that, the seating capacity of the Aquatics Centre (just 1,750) remains a limitation. For context, similar Olympic venues over the past three editions have hosted 15,000 spectators or more.

So while Ahmedabad has made huge progress, the road to Olympic-level readiness is still long.

However, building Olympic-quality facilities won't fix the deeper issues that plague Indian swimming. The medal count may paint a rosy picture, but the reality of India's performance levels remains miles behind Asia's powerhouses.

In truth, India's medal success partly came because the event wasn't a top priority for countries like China, Japan and Korea. The Koreans skipped the meet altogether, while China and Japan sent mostly their junior contingents.

"Most of the top Chinese swimmers are missing from the event because they are preparing for the Chinese National Games in six weeks' time. I saw this event as an opportunity to warm up for the Games too," said Qin Haiyang, the reigning world champion and breaststroke world record holder.

Even then, the gulf in quality was hard to ignore. China still bagged 38 gold medals in 52 swimming and diving events, dominating with significant margins. For India, only a handful of performances -- notably Srihari's -- looked good enough to meet the Sports Ministry's new qualification standards for the Asian Games, which is equivalent to top-six finishes in individual events and top-eight in team events of the last Asiad.

"The medal haul was encouraging as we exceeded expectations," said India's head coach Nihar Ameen. "But it will not be right to compare the timings with the Asian Games; it will be much faster next year." His words reflect both optimism and caution; celebrating the progress, yet acknowledging how far India still has to go.

That brings up the big question: Why does India still trail behind countries like China, who have turned into a swimming powerhouse over the past 15 years? And more importantly, should India be investing so heavily in facilities like Naranpura without addressing the sport's structural weaknesses?

Team captain Sajan Prakash offered some perspective.

"See, such high-performance pools are needed because they give accessibility to elite swimmers to work on their technique," said Sajan. "But we need a structured swimming programme that starts at the very basic (age-group level) if we want to reach the top. We need a shift in understanding the sporting culture."

Currently, an aspiring Indian can begin swimming quite young; often before starting school. They can start competing from age 10 in sub-junior categories and continue through the senior ranks by 18. Among all states, Karnataka remains the heartbeat of Indian swimming, with Bengaluru's academies drawing top talent from across the country.

While starting early helps and is ideal for grassroots development, the Swimming Federation of India (SFI) has often been accused of not doing its part. As the national governing body, its role extends beyond event management; it's supposed to nurture the ecosystem for swimming, diving and water polo. Yet, the federation's recent handling of the Asian Aquatics gave a glimpse of their functioning, or lack of it.

From announcing the squad just hours before the opening event to mismanaging race timings that caused multiple delays, the SFI's disorganisation was on full display. Several athletes, including foreign ones, expressed surprise over such delays.

Some Indian swimmers even revealed they were told late at night or early morning about their participation in specific races, leaving them scrambling to prepare with barely an hour's notice.

"We didn't know which events we were swimming until the last moment," said one participant on conditions of anonimity while reflecting on just how chaotic things were behind the scenes.

Adding to the problems was the quality of food served at the so-called national camp. Many athletes called it "non-athlete friendly." What was billed as a "one-month high-performance camp" turned into a test of endurance off the pool as well.

And yet, despite the chaos, the swimmers delivered. The young squad managed to produce India's best-ever performance on home soil, proving that talent and grit can thrive even in adversity. Regardless of the absence of big Asian names, the Indian swimmers still had to fight hard against opposition from the rest of the continent.

The Asian Aquatics Championships may have painted a rosy picture of Indian swimming, but it also exposed how far the system needs to evolve.

From age-group development to federation accountability, the path ahead is long. But for now, this medal-laden week in Ahmedabad offers a glimmer of hope that Indian swimming, finally, is beginning to make its splash.

Sciver-Brunt powers England past Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, PTI: England stamped their authority on the Women's World Cup with a commanding 89-run win over Sri Lanka in Colombo on Saturday, powered by a classy hundred from Nat Sciver-Brunt and a masterly spell of spin from Sophie Ecclestone.

Put in to bat, England wobbled early but Sciver-Brunt soaked up the pressure well and anchored the innings with a chanceless century to steer her side to a strong 253-9.

Sri Lanka, in reply, were never in the hunt and folded for 164 as Ecclestone spun a web around their batters.

Dropped on three, England skipper Sciver-Brunt made the hosts pay a heavy price. After a watchful start, she shifted gears during the death overs, unleashing a flurry of strokes.

Her run-a-ball 117, laced with nine fours and two sixes, was a commanding innings. The shot that brought up her 10th ODI hundred, a majestic loft over extra cover off Sugandika Kumari, was her best of the day.

Brief scores: England: 253/9 in 50 overs (Tammy Beaumont 32, Heather Knight 29, Nat Sciver-Brunt 117; Udeshika Prabodhani 2-55, Sugandika Kumari 2-66, Inoka Ranaweera 3-33) bt Sri Lanka: 164 all out in 45.4 overs (Hasini Perera 35, Harshitha Samarawickrama 33; Nat Sciver-Brunt 2-25, Charlie Dean 2-47, Sophie Ecclestone 4-17).
Result: England won by 89 runs.
PoM: Nat Sciver-Brunt.

CRICKET WOMEN'S ODI WORLD CUP

India face dour Aussie test

Rattled hosts will look to bolster their attack of five bowlers after SA defeat

VISAKHAPATNAM, PTI

India will need to be tactically flexible and think about adding a sixth bowling option against reigning champions Australia to steady their wavering Women's World Cup campaign here on Sunday.

The three-wicket defeat against South Africa on Thursday exposed the limitations of sticking to the five-bowler template in all conditions.

Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur turned to her part-time off-spin in the absence of a sixth bowler, but once the Proteas targeted the pacers past the 40th over, the home side ran out of ideas.

Kranti Gaud and Amanjot Kaur conceded 30 runs in 12 balls across the 47th and 49th overs as South Africa overhauled a 252-run target.

The current Indian bowling line-up contains two right-arm pacers (Gaud, Kaur), two off-spinners (Deepti Sharma, Sneh Rana) and a left-arm spinner (Sree Charani).

If the pitch at the ACA-VDCA stadium pitch holds true, the strong Aussies batting unit can put this rather unidimensional attack through the wringer with ease.

India will require a proper sixth bowler to summon if a crisis reoccurs, and Harmanpreet's part-time spin is nothing more than cannon fodder against a team like Australia, who have accomplished hitters like Ashleigh Gardner, Alyssa Healy, Ellyse Perry etc.

But selection of the sixth bowler is not a straightforward choice either.

India's top-order failures, including skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (left) and her deputy Smriti Mandhana, have become a recurring theme and the hosts will look to change that when they meet Australia on Sunday. PTI

LIVE 3:00 PM, STAR SPORTS NETWORK

Bowling reserve

The hosts might prefer to add an extra spinner, if they indeed decide so, because Nadine de Klerk said South Africa had targeted Indian pacers as spinners were able to get some purchase off the deck in the last match.

They have a left-arm spinner in seasoned Radha Yadav, who is also a reasonable lower-order batter.

One possibility is to bring her in place of Rana, but Australia have two left-handers in their line-up in Beth Mooney, who made a hundred against Pakistan in their previous match, and opener Phoebe Litchfield.

So, India might just like to keep the off-spinners with them as they can take the ball away from left-handers.

India can bring in pacer Arundhati Reddy, possibly for Amanjot, but that again will rob them of some late-order batting solidity which has helped them more than once in this event,

India can also ponder over replacing Harleen Deol with Yadav but that will result in the erosion of considerable strength from an already malfunctioning top-order.

Indian top-order batters' struggles have become a recurring theme in this ODI showpiece.

They were perilously close to a total shutdown against Sri Lanka and Pakistan before late order batters did the firefighting.

It turned into a reality against South Africa, and Australia, who have a varied and skillful attack, will punish such lapses quite mercilessly.

Heftier contributions from Smriti Mandhana, Harmanpreet and Jemimah Rodrigues is non-negotiable against the seven-time winners.

Mandhana, in particular, will have to raise her game to the pre-World Cup level — a phase when she made 928 runs from 14 innings at an average of 66. Her feeble run at the top — 54 runs from three matches at 18 — has severely hurt the team in this tournament. However, there is a comforting factor. Australia is one of her favourite opponents, stacking up 916 runs at 48.21 with four hundreds in ODIs.

India will be hope that the graceful left-hander will unleash her magic once more to avoid slipping into an undesired tight space ahead of equally tough games.

Kasparov crowned despite late Anand surge

ST LOUIS (USA), PTI: Thirty years to the day, history was repeated as Garry Kasparov defeated Viswanathan Anand in the 10th game of the Clutch Chess Legends contest to win the match with two games to spare.

It was in 1995 on October 10 that Anand took a draw in the 18th game to concede the 20-games Classical World Championship match against Kasparov 7.5-10.5 on the 107th floor of the World Trade Centre in New York.

As per rules, the last two games under blitz time control were still played and Anand pulled back two victories albeit a little too late in the day. The scoreline eventually read 13-11 with Kasparov winning USD 78,000, while Anand took home USD 66,000 in the USD 1,44,000 contest.

Leading the match by five points, Kasparov knew that Anand still had a chance to win the match as the final day had as many as 12 points at stake with each victory worth three points.

Simran skips felicitation event

Medallists receive over Rs 1.09 crore in cash prize

NEW DELHI, PTI

Simran Sharma. X

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Saturday felicitated medal winners of the recently-concluded World Para-Athletics Championships here and gave away cash awards amounting to over Rs 1.09 crore while lauding their indefatigable spirit.

However, visually impaired sprinter Simran Sharma, who won a T12 100m gold and 200m silver, did not attend the closed-door ceremony after her guide Umar Saifi was handed a provisional suspension by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) for failing dope test.

"It's unfortunate that she could not come. From what we know, she is quite shocked by the turn of events," a well-placed source told PTI.

India won 22 medals, including six gold, nine silver and seven bronze, in the competition held in the national capital from September 27 to October 5.

"The Department of Sports, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, gave away cash awards amounting to over Rs 1.09 crore to the para athletes," read a statement from the Sports Authority of India (SAI).

De Paul, Suarez to join Messi's four-city India tour

KOLKATA, PTI: The much-anticipated 'GOAT Tour to India 2025' got bigger on Friday with World Cup winner Rodrigo De Paul and Uruguayan legend Luis Suarez confirming their participation alongside Lionel Messi.

"Game Set Match... So it's now confirmed and official. World Cup winner Argentine superstar Rodrigo De Paul and Uruguayan and Barcelona legend Luis Suárez will join Messi for the 'GOAT Tour to India 2025' Vamos," posted organiser Satadru Dutta on social media.

De Paul was a key member of Argentina's 2022 World Cup-winning side while Suarez, one of the most prolific strikers of his generation, is a former Barcelona and Liverpool star with over 500 career goals.

Ticket status

Tickets have been selling briskly, and for the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, all 28,000 available tickets (priced from Rs 6,980) have been sold out.

In Kolkata, 46,000 of the 68,000 tickets have been sold, with prices starting at Rs 4,366. At the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi tickets are priced from Rs 7,670 onwards.

Prokofiev for feature

PUNE SELECTIONS

Prokofiev, from the stables of Prasanna Kumar and to be ridden by Suraj Narredu, is fancied to win the Villoo C Poonawalla Pune Derby, the premier event of the Pune races to be run over a mile and a quarter at the races on Sunday.

The first race starts at 1:30 pm.

1. Commander Trophy - 1400M: Scaramouche 1, Ghirardelli 2, Opus Dei 3.
2. Jayant M Shah & Champak M Shah Gold Trophy - 2400M: Viking 1, Looking Like A Wow 2, Endurance 3.
3. Pune Police Commissioner's Trophy - 1200M: Cindrella's Dream 1, Eastern Monarch 2, El Moran 3.
4. Jimmy Umrigar Trophy (Div I) - 1400M: Exciting 1, Caradoc 2, Alfonsine 3.
5. Noshir & Dolly Dhunjibhoy Sprint Million - 1200M: Shambala 1, Magileto 2, Christophany 3.
6. Villoo C Poonawalla Pune Derby - 2000M: Prokofiev 1, Baychimo 2, Zacharias 3.
7. Jimmy Umrigar Trophy (Div II) - 1400M: Claude 1, Conjurer 2, Namiri 3.
8. Vinayak Salver - 1000M: Menjou's Moustache 1, Flashman 2, Red Mist 3.
Day's best: Shambala. **Jackpot:** 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8. **I treble:** 2, 3 & 4. **II treble:** 6, 6 & 7.

Golden Kingdom wins Suresh Mahindra Trophy

PUNE RESULTS

Adhirajsingh Jodha-trained Golden Kingdom, ridden by Antony Raj, won the Suresh Mahindra Trophy, the feature event of the Pune races on Saturday. Trevor Patel-ridden Evaldo crossed the line in second position.

1. Severus Plate - 1400M: Magical Star (Gautam Kotwal) Sandesh 1; Taabiir (Trevor Patel) 2; Exoctic Star (Pranil) 3; Baleno (Bhawani Singh) 4; Wb: 3/4, 2-1/4L, Hd. T: 1:26.58. TB: Pradeep Chouhan. Fav: Magical Star.
2. NK Pudumjee Salver - 1600M: The Milenium Force (Vijeth Bhandari) Sandesh 1; Christofle (Trevor Patel) 2; Kimiko (C Umesh) 3; Bubbly Boy (Aditya Waydande) 4; Wb: 2-3/4, 1-1/4, 1/2L. T: 1:37.50. TB: Pradeep Chouhan. Fav: The Milenium Force.
3. Pissarro Plate - 1000M: Goddesss Of Dawn (Kapil Bahi) Mukesh Kumar 1; Lord Eric (Trevor Patel) 2; Elusive Art (Ramswarup) 3; Aperol (CS Jodha) 4; Wb: 1/2, -1/2, 3/4L. T: 0:57.51. TB: Aman Altaf Hussain. Fav: Azure.
4. Panchashil Million - 1000M: Foxy (Jaydev Mody) Sandesh 1; All For Love (Yash Narredu) 2; Don Julio (Trevor Patel) 3; Majesticus (C Umesh) 4; Wb: 2-1/2, 2-3/4, 2L. T: 0:57.82. TB: Behram Cama. Fav: All For Love.
5. Sir Sultan Chinoy Trophy - 1800M: Dreamer (Prashant Nagar) NS Parmar 1; Little John (Antony Raj) 2; Brasilier (Pranil) 3; Dedication (Ramswarup) 4; Wb: 3-1/4, 1-3/4, 3L. T: 1:51.38. TB: MK Jadhav. Fav: Juracan.
6. Suresh Mahindra Trophy - 3200M: Golden Kingdom (Kishore Rungta) Antony Raj 1; Evaldo (Trevor Patel) 2; Not Run: Queen Of Kings. Wb: 61. T: 3:28.91. TB: Adhirajsingh Jodha. Fav: Evaldo.

Bengaluru dividends:
I race: Rs 15w; 11, 17, 97p; Fc: Rs 153; Q: Rs 65; Shp: Rs 57; Thp: Rs 270; Tri: Rs 3,164 & 1,657; Ex: Rs 9,689 & 3,559.
II race: Rs 10w; Rs 10, 13, 17p; Fc: Rs 26; Q: Rs 19; Shp: Rs 26; Thp: Rs 30; Tri: Rs 60 & 32; Ex: Rs 310 & 148.
III race: Rs 220w; 44, 13, 12p; Fc: Rs 2,225; Q: Rs 699; Shp: Rs 34; Thp: Rs 61; Tri: Rs 4,869 & 2,087; Ex: Rs 80,122.
IV race: Rs 25w; 10, 12, 13p; Fc: Rs 45; Q: Rs 21; Shp: Rs 23; Thp: Rs 29; Tri: Rs 56 & 42: Ex: Rs 403 & 303.
V race: Rs 78w; 21, 25, 84p; Fc: Rs 692; Q: Rs 429; Shp: Rs 52; Thp: Rs 116; Tri: Rs 25,110; Ex: Rs 70,427 (c/o).
VI race: Rs 15w.

Jackpot: Rs 35,237 (12).
Runner-up: Rs 4,647 (39).
Treble: Rs 8,112 (1).

Sayed Sabeer

Hubballi boy wins state's 1st gold

BENGALURU, DHNS

On a day filled with third-place finishes for Karnataka athletes, upcoming quartermiler Sayed Sabeer blazed through the track to top the podium in the boys' under-18 400m event at the 40th National Junior Athletics Championships at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar on Saturday.

The 17-year-old from Hubballi clocked 47.48 seconds to give the state their first gold medal of the meet. Uttar Pradesh's Abhay Dubey finished second with a time of 48.13sec while Tamil Nadu's Nakul Prabhu crossed the line in 48.21 sec to be third.

Following four podium finishes on the opening day, there were a few more added by the Karnataka athletes at the four-day event.

In the U-20 boys' section, Ranganna Naykar, with a timing of 3:49.58, finished third in the 1500m race.

In the girls' U-16 category, Nupura Holla (11.87s) 80m hurdles clinched a bronze while N Sanjana Reddy (12.72m) also claimed a bronze to take the state's medal count to eight (1 gold, 2 silver, 5 bronze) at the halfway mark.

Results (only Karnataka): Boys:
Under-20: 1500m: Ranganna Naykar (3:49.58) 3.
U-18: 400m: Sayed Sabeer (47.48s) 1.
Girls: U-16: 80m hurdles: Nupura Holla (11.87s) 3.
Shot put: M Sanjana Reddy (12.72m) 3.

POORVA PAKSHA

AI could have been one of these things first

Aakash Singh Rathore
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Imagine the world in 2030, where 99% of new job openings have vanished to AI. Roman Yampolskiy, an AI safety researcher, outlines this grim possibility: superintelligent systems take over everything from coding to caregiving, leaving universal basic income (UBI) as the only lifeline amid mass despair. For India's 500 million youth (15-29) already facing 15% unemployment, this isn't abstract. It's a ticking time bomb on entry-level roles in data entry and customer service, already down 15% amid AI adoption – expect 45% of software engineering jobs to soon be impacted.

'I could have been/One of these things first'.

An unlikely hero emerges: the village godboy. A viral X video this week captures a scrawny kid in a sweaty baniyan flailing wildly on a threadbare mat, a village baba channelling the divine – eyes bulging, arms snatching at spirits, surrounded by a cluster of wide-eyed aunties in sun-faded sarees. Commenters pile on: 'Clever little scammer, playing the god card for free biryani,' or 'Village con artist, outsmarting the lot with zero schooling.' It's raw entrepreneurial grit: preying on piety for alms, feasts, and village clout – a sleazy gig, perhaps, but one that no AI bot will rugpull.

'I could have been a sailor, could have been a cook/ A real live lover, could have been a book'.

Nick Drake's 1970 lament, 'One of these things first', tallies unlived lives. It seems pretty apt for India's youth, as they will soon scroll the job boards only to find bots filling all the gaps. Then there's Samuel Shadrach, a 24-year-old IIT Delhi and Berkeley machine learning graduate. In September, he was on a hunger strike. His demand: US-China treaties to freeze superintelligent AI, averting extinction risks. Tied to sit-ins at Anthropic in San Francisco and blockades at DeepMind in London, Shadrach invoked *satyagraha* – fittingly timed for the recent Gandhi Jayanti.

Both the village kid's hoax and this educated elite's *satyagraha* are homegrown Indian ripostes to the AI juggernaut, but only the godboy's charade stands a prayer of paying the bills in the long run – irony of ironies, the illiterate outsmarts the IITs because AI devours the diploma'd.

'I could have been your pillar, could have been your door/ I could have stayed beside you, could have stayed for more'.

Experts amplify the alarm. Eliezer Yudkowsky envisions that just a handful of jobs will endure in as little as three years: trainers, ethicists, perhaps plumbers. Tristan Harris cites that 13% of entry-level creative and admin roles have already been erased. Geoffrey Hinton, AI's 'godfather', predicts massive unemployment and inequality spikes. The World Economic Forum tallies 92 million global displacements by 2030, with any new roles emerging incapable of offsetting losses. Anthropic's Dario Amodei warns of 20% unemployment surges as white-collar entry jobs are slashed.

'I could be here and now/ I would be, I should be, but how?'

Our own country's projections, however, remain rosy. They seem to side more with the village baba than the IIT *satyagrahi*. NITI Aayog's September report claims AI will contribute $500-600 billion to GDP by 2035, while Goldman Sachs India eyes 2.3 million AI-specific openings by 2027, and EY India a 2.61% productivity gain by 2030.

By contrast, Walmart, the USA's single-largest private employer, says AI will 'literally change every job', with the company's 2.1 million global headcount staying flat over the next three years despite robust growth plans, as automation eliminates new roles. The pattern repeats across the top four US employers – Walmart, Amazon, Allied Universal, and Accenture – all pouring billions into AI instead of headcount expansion. But we expect the opposite from Indian employers?

These flawed forecasts underpin inadequate plans that leave India unprepared for the scale of unemployment ahead. Skill India 2.0 targets 100 million reskills by 2030 with AI modules, and the $1.2-billion IndiaAI Mission funds transition centres and e-Shram wage-loss pilots. UBI trials in Madhya Pradesh, reaching 2,000 people, show modest well-being gains. But nationwide UBI would cost $1 trillion annually – measures too small and scattered to counter a billion Indians at risk in a system betting on growth that may never materialise.

The disconnect spells outright tragedy. If youth joblessness climbs over 65%, as pessimistic forecasts suggest for educated segments, the fallout will be severe: waves of protests, mass migrations, surging crime, and radicalisation among a generation stripped of purpose.

'I could have been/ One of these things first'.

Nick Drake's lyrics press the point. In a decade, when IIT whiz-kids hawking code to chatbots are soon to be begging for scraps, that village god-boy might be the real visionary, divining donations from the devout while the rest of us prompt our way to oblivion.

THAT BLIND RHODES SCHOLAR

In purple, some signs of hope

As I write this column, I'm at the International Purple Fest, Goa, a first-of-its-kind intervention to celebrate the capabilities and talents of persons with disabilities (PwD). When I first arrived in Panaji for this fest on October 8, it felt like stepping into another world – a world that didn't merely celebrate diversity, but wove it into every seam of its programming. In its promotional materials, the festival promised universal design, tactile signage, sign language interpretation, "sensory rooms", and accessible transport. Those promises were not mere PR – I saw many of them come alive.

Purple Conventions – conferences on specific issues within the disability rights domain, such as access to justice or enhancing rural livelihood opportunities – are a highlight. Some of the moments at the event stayed with me.

In a session organised for State Disability Commissioners, we heard from Parliamentarians with disabilities in Australia and Armenia who spoke about their extraordinarily difficult, and successful, journeys. After a conference, a disability rights activist told me that the zila parishad office in her district does not have a wheelchair-friendly toilet – a pointer to how far we have to go to make accessibility a living reality for our disabled citizenry. I visited the prototype of an accessible bank branch set up by the Union Bank of India, featuring a talking ATM, an accessible credit card, and a point-of-sale device.

In a talk I gave with colleagues at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, on making the built environment accessible for PwD, we argued that local building bye-laws must incorporate accessibility norms, so that permits can be withheld for buildings that are not born accessible and penalties can be handed down, where required. One member in the audience asked: "Isn't what you are proposing a case of the tail wagging the dog – in a country where no bus is wheelchair-accessible, few schools or hospitals are accessible, what is the purpose of this presentation?" I disagreed with the premise of his question and argued that these utilities are inaccessible because when they were permitted to ply or occupy a public space, no questions on accessibility were asked.

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Purple Fest is audacious, and in that audacity lie both its strengths and its challenges. Strengths first: It is rare to see such a comprehensive approach to accessibility in the form of a festival. Goa has tried to manifest a model. The event brought to the public gaze the 21 disabilities enumerated in the RPwD Act, 2016. It didn't just place PwD on stage; it made them interlocutors. The 'Purple Think Tank', with dialogues on inclusive education, accessibility of the built environment, and political participation, underscored that disability discourse is intersectional. Following Goa's lead, many states, such as Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir, and the Rashtrapati Bhavan, have organised their versions.

On the weaknesses, three months ago, the Disability Rights Association of Goa argued that the Fest is not addressing the needs of those at the grassroots and put forward a 7-point programme of action for the Government to pursue. While these festivals are important, they must not come at the cost of meeting the everyday needs of PwD – a well-paying job, access to assistive technology and rehabilitation support, quality education, a social safety net for those out of the workforce, and access to justice when rights are violated.

On returning to my hotel one evening, as I tried to book a cab to go to a party, I realised that the Goa Miles app, the only viable solution to book cabs in Goa, has an inaccessible captcha on the first page, creating a forced dependency for me, a blind person, on a sighted colleague to book a cab. I felt a jolt: festivals can be islands, and the broader city and all its infrastructure must, over time, become accessible too.

If Purple Fest is to become more than a marquee event, its legacy must extend, influencing local building bye-laws, procurement procedures, school curricula, and public infrastructure. The feel-good factor created by the event is no doubt important in creating optimism in those tasked with the daunting mandate of reckoning with an ableist world. But we must realise that creating a more accessible India is a daily affair, not something that can be outsourced to an annual spectacle. I came home carrying memories of voices, of exchanges, of discomforts that provoke growth. I suspect Purple Fest will always keep me looking over my shoulder to ensure that our everyday practices match the reality that the fest envisions.

SANS THE SACRED

What good are scriptures to shoe-throwers?

The lawyer who recently attempted to hurl a shoe at the Chief Justice of India is reported to be unapologetic – even seemingly abdicating personal responsibility by claiming that God instructed him to do as he did. The lawyer in question might be interested to hear a similar sentiment that was expressed in the *Mahabharata*.

"There's a god dwelling in my heart – I only do as he impels me to." Which character says this? Duryodhana, of course. Now, there is nothing wrong with the sentiment simply because it is the villain who voices it, you might argue. Does Krishna not tell Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "There is a controller who dwells in the heart of all beings. He causes them all to spin on the machine of *maya*"? Of course. There is nothing wrong with recognising that we are all predisposed to behave in certain problematic ways by our nature, socialisation, and, if we believe in it, destiny or God. But it is usually the villains of the story who think that excuses inexcusable behaviour.

One of the skills the characters in the epics and the *puranas* seem to have honed carefully is that of expressing violence verbally when they could not or did not want to engage in a violent, physical encounter. Think of the various oaths the characters take that seem intense or self-defeating to the point of ridicule. Arjuna, for instance, vows multiple times to jump into fire if some condition is not met. And then, there is Bhima, who vows to crush Duryodhana's thigh and to drink Dushasana's blood in the battle – both are horrifying vows that he fulfils in gory detail on the battlefield of the Kurukshetra. But we all know this ferocious Bhima. The Bhima story I want to tell you about happens right before the Kauravas attempt to disrobe Draupadi.

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The scene is set in the royal assembly, and Yudhishtira has just gambled away his kingdom, his wealth, all his brothers, himself, and Draupadi too. Bhima watches on as his elder brother gambles and loses all of these. But the loss of Draupadi is intolerable to him. He says aloud to Yudhishtira, "The kingdom, we four, and you yourself – all were lost to the Kauravas by deceit. And that did not make me angry. After all, you are the lord of all of these. But staking Draupadi is too much. She does not deserve the torments she is undergoing after marrying us. I am furious at you for what you did to her! Sahadeva, fetch some fire. I shall burn the hands that staked Draupadi."

Arjuna is horrified, telling Bhima that he has never heard him speak like that to their elder brother before, and reminding him they must present a united front before their enemies. At this point, Bhima retorts – "I am aware of all this. If I were not, I would have forcefully burnt his hands myself instead of asking Sahadeva to fetch fire." Even the mighty Bhima, who performs unthinkable acts of violence in the Kurukshetra battle and delights in pummelling demons quite often in the epic, knows how to channel his anger into words to preserve the decorum of a royal assembly. So, what's the lawyer's excuse?

That's your reading of the story, you might object. What is to stop someone else from picking up a different story from the *puranas*, and reading it as justifying hurling shoes at judges when one feels affronted? Nothing at all, I concede. After all, the *Hitopadesha* tells us: "What good are scriptures to a person with no sense? What good is a mirror if one has no eyes?"

THE BIG LENS

Iron Brothers in rough weather

Bilateral relations between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the People's Republic of China (PRC) were established in 1950, when Pakistan was among the first few countries to sever diplomatic relations with the Republic of China and recognise the PRC as official China. Beijing needed every small and big country in Asia to support its existence. This relationship between an Islamic republic and an atheist Communist state, as different as chalk and cheese as far as culture, civilisation, and religion were concerned, strengthened gradually as they both saw the need to unite against a common enemy – India.

A year after the Chinese aggression on India in 1962, Beijing decided to resolve all border disputes with Pakistan through the Sino-Pakistan Agreement of 1963, and provide military assistance to Pakistan, which began in early 1966, a year after the 1965 misadventure of Pakistan's war with India. But Beijing realised the military asymmetry between India and Pakistan and refused to be drawn into the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War foisted on India by Islamabad. Nevertheless, the Beijing-Islamabad Strategic Alliance agreed upon in 1972 paved the way for economic cooperation and civil nuclear cooperation in the power sector.

But the strategic partnership turned into a relationship between 'Iron Brothers' after Xi Jinping's visit in 2015, when he rolled out the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as part of his flagship Belt & Road Initiative global outreach project. The CPEC connects Pakistan and China through a highway that links Kashgar to Khunjerab and Gwadar Port in Balochistan. CPEC is not a favour extended to Balochistan but largely serves China – most of its trade, especially that of oil, will be done through Gwadar.

Beijing has turned towards the Pakistani army for the protection of its men and assets in the region, but in vain. It has been seen as coordinating efforts to establish a China-Pakistan-Afghanistan alliance for regional stability. But the real agenda is for a counter-terrorism base in Afghanistan to weaken the Turkistan Islamic Party, which has been spearheading a movement to free the Xinjiang province from China.

Seshadri Chari
reads between the lines on big national and international developments from his vantage point in the BJP and the RSS
@seshadrichari

Meanwhile, Pakistan has moved closer to the US after Operation Sindoor, which broke the back of its homegrown terror outfits and exposed the limitations of China's military technology support. China will also be wary because Pakistan may trade these defence technologies with American agencies and expose China's defence systems. After all, according to unconfirmed reports, after the 2011 Abbottabad raid, Chinese engineers were allowed to examine the remnants of a downed US stealth-modified Black Hawk helicopter. Hence, it is likely that the Iron Brothers may downscale defence trade and limit their engagement to economic and anti-terrorism activities.

But even in these areas, the two countries don't seem to be seeing eye to eye. As concerns rise over Pakistan's inability to protect the lives of Chinese engineers and assets, Beijing has stepped back from financing the Main Line-1 railway project, which connects Karachi to Peshawar. It is also pressuring Islamabad to allow Chinese security personnel to be deployed in CPEC project areas in Balochistan as protection from terrorist attacks. This will pitch the Baloch Liberation Army in confrontation with Chinese military personnel. Besides, the US is already eyeing rare earth and other natural resources, including the much-publicised oil, in Balochistan.

Reports said China's plans to deploy its navy in Gwadar, as part of its 'String of Pearls' strategy in the Indian Ocean Region, were resisted by Pakistan, as Islamabad's counter-demand to Beijing, to share second-strike nuclear capabilities, was rejected by China. Pakistan also denied the Chinese navy from making a port call at Gwadar during a joint naval Sea Guardians III exercise, probably due to American pressure.

Recent geopolitical developments – India, Russia, and China coming closer on regional and trade issues, Pakistan moving closer to the US at the cost of its security and financial dependence on China, India and Afghanistan joining hands to fight terrorism and improve trade relations, and a likely escalation of the military conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan in the wake of Islamabad's military action against Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan – will have a profound impact on China's foreign policy, compelling Beijing to review its relations with its Iron Brother.

Guided by transactional interests, China's CPEC and other defence and commercial initiatives with Pakistan add the element of a deal-making approach to its foreign policy. Beijing feels, and perhaps rightly so, that Pakistan's utility for China's security and strategy in Asia and the Indian Ocean Region is long over.

DHARMA

How merchants shape the Satvik holiness

Devdutt Pattanaik
works with gods and demons who churn nectar from the ocean of Indian, Chinese, Islamic, Christian, even secular mythologies

The richest families in India are strictly vegetarian and belong to the vaishya varna. They are supported by politicians committed to the cause of vegetarianism or Satvikism, a new form of Hinduism. As these rich communities take control of temples and pilgrimage sites, we find them pushing for Satvikism.

Yet, historically, the Veda had no problem with meat-eating. It is only after 200 AD, when the *Manusmriti* was composed, do we find dharmic arguments against meat. The 21st-century rise of Satvikism (obsession with imposing vegetarianism) reveals the stranglehold of the merchant class in India. In ancient times, they were patrons of Jainism and Buddhism, who invented fasting and vegetarianism as a spiritual practice. Now they fund many Hindu lobbies.

When we discuss Hindu society, the focus is on 'pure' Brahmins, 'powerful' Kshatriyas, and 'impure' Shudras. Rarely do we turn our attention to the 'rich' mercantile community, the third of the four-fold varna system. Their stories are found more in Buddhist Jataka and Jain lore than in Hindu *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. It reveals their outsider status.

Vedic culture was originally pastoral. Later, it became agricultural. The Brahmin priest was funded by cow- and land (*kshetra*)-owning communities. The emerging merchant class, feeling sidelined, favoured the monastic orders. The monks travelled with the merchants. The merchants funded Buddhist monasteries and Jain temples found along trade routes of Central India and the Western Ghats. It is here that the concept of the balance sheet extended beyond the material to the spiritual, inspiring the karma theory. One could earn good fortune by supporting the monastic order.

Harappan cities were built by merchants who traded with the Persian Gulf. The great Harappan settlement of Rakhigarhi is barely an hour from Agroha, a city linked to the Agrawal community. Legend says their king, Agrasen, established Agroha as a city of merchants, abandoning the military path and choosing the mercantile route. He encouraged support for young entrepreneurs by having each family contribute one brick and one gold coin. The brick built a house, and the coin served as seed capital.

Buddhism and Jainism emerged around 500 BC when the Gangetic Plain was trading with lands beyond the Hindu Kush, and ships were carrying cotton from India to Persia in the west and Southeast Asia in the east. The Rashtrakuta empire, which traded with Arabs in the 8th century, was a patron of Jainism. It was the merchant lobby that provided ships to Chola kings to clear trade routes in the Malacca Strait in 1000 AD. But this influence waned when Buddhists and Jains were violently pushed out by the rising tide of Hindu Bhakti movements after 1100 AD.

Many merchants were forced to adopt Hinduism to survive. In aligning with the Hindu faith, they assumed a place within the caste system below priests and kings. To safeguard their upper-caste status, they claimed descent from warriors. Those who revered Shiva said he inspired them to become merchants; those who followed Vishnu asserted Parashurama's influence led them to trade. But these merchants favoured Brahmins who followed their Satvik dietary practices. In other words, the merchants forced the Brahmin dietary purification, not the other way around.

The powerful Maheshwari community of merchants traces its heritage to Shiva. They believe their ancestors insulted a sage and were cursed with disease and death, but Shiva rescued them on the condition that they would forsake their military ways. So the iron sword (*talwar*) was replaced by the iron pan balance (*tarazu, tula*).

The Khatri communities of north-west India tell a story of survival: when Parashurama was said to be annihilating Kshatriyas across North India, some Kshatriyas survived on the condition that they would abandon military pursuits. Another version suggests that pregnant Kshatriya women took refuge in Brahmin households, where Brahmins, to protect them, ate food cooked by these women. The children of these women became the merchant class, though they retained their warrior lineage by calling themselves Khatri.

The Khatri community played a significant role in the rise of Sikhism. The first ten Sikh gurus are said to be Khatris – merchants with a warrior ancestry. In the 19th century, when the British attempted to classify thousands of *jatis* in India according to the four-fold system outlined in the Dharma Shastras, they struggled to categorise the Khatris, who identified as Kshatriyas but practised as merchants.

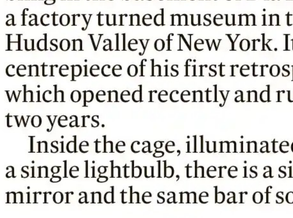
Now, the merchants of India strategically control politicians in the country, mirroring what is happening in Capitalist America. The Satvik movement is a symptom of that, but China, always suspicious of merchants, has kept them in check. For China does not care for purity or profit; it has always privileged power.

Minds over monsters

Does every act of evil stem from a sick mind? Can every violent deed be pinned on mental illness, or is some degree of darkness inherent in human nature? Exploring the uneasy overlap between mental illness and morality, Joe Nucci questions the psychobabble that often explains cruelty through chemistry

Things to remember

1. There is some bad, evil, or antisocial behaviour that can be explained by undiagnosed illness, which is likely more biological than mental in nature.
2. Be careful of further stigmatising mental illness by associating criminality and mental illness.
3. Reconsider whether or not the best way to be a good person is to believe you are incapable of being bad.



In a TEDx Talk titled "The Most Important Lesson from 83,000 Brain Scans," Dr Daniel Amen tells a story about how a nine-year-old boy violently attacked a little girl on the baseball field. The boy had been drawing pictures of himself hanging from a tree and shooting other children. It was later revealed that the boy had a cyst in his brain. When the cyst was removed, his violent impulses and thoughts went away completely. He turned back into a sweet and loving little boy. The boy was Dr Amen's nephew. Dr Amen points out that this was likely a Columbine or Sandy Hook (mass shootings at schools) waiting to happen.

Aaron Hernandez, a tight end for the New England Patriots, is infamous for murdering his friend Odin Lloyd. Hernandez was diagnosed with Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE), and that diagnosis is used to explain his actions. Dr Ann McKee, a neuropathologist who studies CTE, said, "We can't take the pathology and explain the behaviour, but we can say collectively that individuals with CTE of this severity have difficulty with impulse control, decision-making, aggression, often emotional volatility, and rage behaviour." Both Dr Amen's nephew and Aaron Hernandez are examples of chilling, yet hopeful, stories about how seemingly unexplainable and atrocious acts may have an underlying, explainable, medical cause.

Through a mental health lens

Personally, I find it encouraging that when people hear about something heinous and awful on the news, they say something like "That's so sick that they did that." If a person is sick, then maybe they can be cured. It's encouraging that people want to be able to explain the awful things that human beings sometimes do to one another. These people are trying to see the best in others. When people view bad, evil, or antisocial behaviour through a mental health lens, that's what they are trying to do. They believe that if the person had been raised properly or had received the right treatment, they wouldn't have done those things. People have these beliefs because there is some compelling evidence for them. According to the Traumatic Brain Injury in Criminal Justice Project at the University of Denver Graduate School of Professional Psychology, some jails have up to 96 per cent of inmates with a history of at least one traumatic brain injury, or TBI.

While rates of TBI vary among sites, again, some view that statistic with a certain degree of hope. Outside of brain cysts and complex TBIs, we have data showing that people with bipolar disorder or a schizophrenia-related disorder are more likely to end up in jail. One study found that people with ADHD are more likely to end up in prison, which makes sense, because if you have poor impulse control, you are more likely to do something without thinking that might get you in trouble.

When someone commits a crime, I agree they deserve the best representation imaginable. If a mental health argument will help someone's case, lawyers should make that argument. If mental health is a factor to consider in the outcome of a trial, it should definitely be taken into account. But does the tendency to explain away sins, mistakes, and crimes against society by pointing to mental illness end up confusing and obscuring the difference between behaviour we deem bad and mental illness itself? In other words, is there perhaps an inflation of the idea that mental illness and bad behaviour are correlated because lawyers will lean on the mental health argument if they can? If that's true, then as a mental health culture, we need to be sure not to get seduced by the psychobabble *(see box)* around comparing and contrasting mental illness and acts we collectively wish to punish as a society.

Victims more than perpetrators

One major problem with the myth that people are not bad, just mentally ill, is that it implies that people with a mental illness are more likely to commit crimes, commit heinous acts, or get into trouble. This is not just false — it is illogical. First of all, all dogs are mammals, but that doesn't mean all mammals are dogs. Just because those who are in jail happen to have higher rates of mental illness or TBIs, that doesn't mean those with mental illness or TBIs are more likely to commit crimes. In fact, a large body of data shows that people with mental illness are much more likely to be victims of violent crime than the perpetrators of it. In one study looking at violence and schizophrenia, it was shown that substance use was a better predictor than just having schizophrenia. In fact, alcohol is a key factor in most violent crime, regardless of your mental health status.

The idea that we can explain away bad behaviour through mental health is alluring because we don't like to consider that we are all capable of terrible things. If someone hurts us physically, it's somewhat comforting to think they have something wrong with their minds or brains. If someone hurts our feelings, it's reassuring to consider that their agitation stemmed from a childhood wound or being overdue for an adjustment with their medication. It's terrifying to believe that someone would hurt us soberly, consciously, and intentionally. That would mean people you trust — people you love — might be capable of a similar transgression. It's even more intimidating to consider that you might be capable of doing things you believe are wrong.

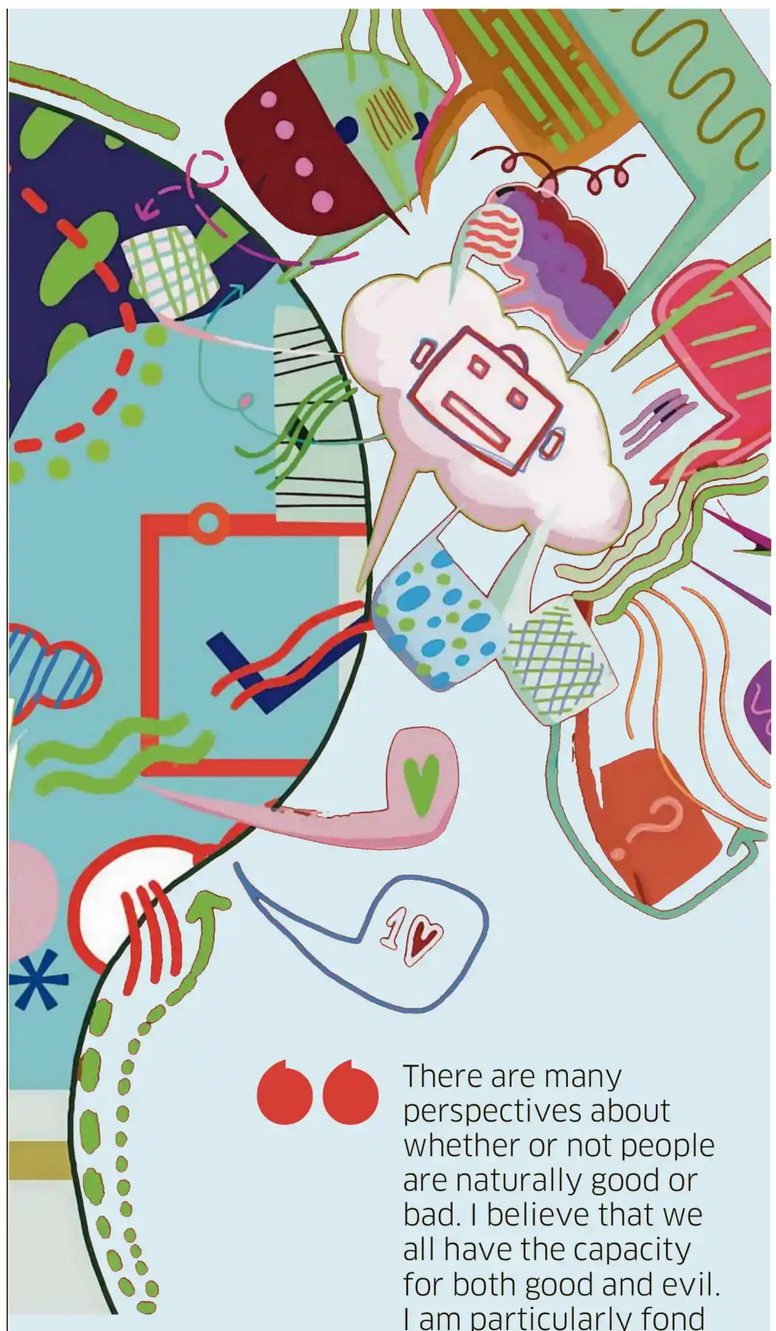
Good and evil: A capacity for both

There are many perspectives about whether or not people are naturally good or bad. I believe that we all have the capacity for both good and evil. I am particularly fond of Carl Jung's analysis, that accepting the fact that you are capable of absolutely horrible things is a mark of maturity. He argues that if you are aware of your capacity for evil, then you can keep an eye on it and conduct yourself in a good or moral fashion. Jung believed that it is not a lack of capacity for bad behaviour that makes someone good; the people who can do bad things but choose not to are the ones who are truly good. Jung thought that people who delude themselves into thinking that they can never do anything that bad are the people who end up committing the most atrocious acts. He also thought that it was unfair to the people who consciously choose good over evil to label people who are incapable of doing bad things as the most moral, because they don't have a choice in the matter.

I had a mentor tell me that in order to become truly masterful in the art and science of psychology, you need to think about deep and dark questions. You need to consider whether or not each and every person has the capacity to do bad things. In my opinion, these sorts of questions quickly leave the realm of psychology and touch on questions of philosophy and even theology. In philosophy, as in psychology, it's vital to define your terms. I do not have a deep or concise definition of bad or evil that I can offer you to contextualise the ideas presented here. I do not think I need one.

If your thinking is that good and evil are totally subjective and do not exist, then you don't agree with the myth by default. If evil doesn't exist, then comparing mental illness to evil is a moot point. Furthermore, I cannot imagine a working definition of evil that would conflict with the larger point I am making: While mental and physical health might explain some behaviour we can classify as bad, it simply cannot explain all of it. To try to convince you otherwise would make me feel like I was trying to sell you a story rather than telling you the truth.

The author is a psychotherapist and writer whose content contextualises mental health misinformation, pop psychology facts and fallacies. Excerpted with permission from Psychobabble: Viral Mental Health Myths & The Truths To Set You Free, recently published by HarperCollins.



> There are many perspectives about whether or not people are naturally good or bad. I believe that we all have the capacity for both good and evil. I am particularly fond of Carl Jung's analysis, that accepting the fact that you are capable of absolutely horrible things is a mark of maturity.

What is psychobabble?

There was a time when talking about mental health was taboo. Today, the tables have turned, but that is not exactly good news. On the one hand, there are widespread apprehensions about AI standing in for therapists and people running to chatbots, hungry for solutions to everything from feeling anxious and depressed to harbouring suicidal thoughts.

On the other hand is the profusion of misinformation online, thanks to people openly discussing their mental wellness in reels and on podcasts. As Joe Nucci writes in the introduction of his book, Psychobabble: "On social media, celebrities, politicians, professional athletes, and an army of ordinary people routinely discuss the details of their mental health in public spaces without fear or social retribution."

Today, mental health influencers look for 'engagement', stand to gain huge followings, make money and land book deals. While some mental health content creators are undoubtedly qualified professionals, there are several others who dole out advice that goes instantly viral or come to conclusions by sharing their own mental health journeys. This is a problem because each individual's experience is different. Given this sharp (and potentially dangerous) rise in 'mental health culture' (for lack of a better phrase), it is vital to separate fact from fiction and discuss the harmful consequences that may arise from misused terms and misinformation. Most of the popular mental health-related content on the internet today is thus categorised as 'psychobabble' — a result of unqualified social media influencers creating an impression of authenticity and authority by using 'therapy-speak' and mental health terminology to dish out advice and thus gain followers and indulge in engagement farming. Which is why Nucci argues that as important as talking about mental health is, it is equally vital to be aware of *how* we talk about mental health.

MIXED BAG

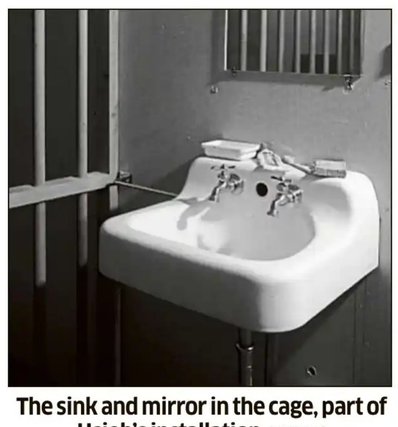
'Mixed Bag' is your Sunday potpourri *— an assortment of snappy articles, engaging ideas and snackable nibbles about this and that, from here and there. Dip in!*

The artist who lived in a cage for a year

"This is home," artist Tehching Hsieh proclaimed proudly. He was sitting on the edge of a discoloured mattress inside a 9-by-11.5-foot cage. He occupied this tiny space from September 30, 1978, to September 30, 1979, as part of a performance artwork that has become the stuff of legend. He did not talk, read, write, listen to the radio or leave the enclosure for one year.

Almost five decades later, Hsieh cheerfully offered a reporter a tour of the cage, which he was reassembling in the basement of Dia Beacon, a factory turned museum in the Hudson Valley of New York. It is the centrepiece of his first retrospective, which opened recently and runs for two years.

Inside the cage, illuminated by a single lightbulb, there is a sink, a mirror and the same bar of soap and



The sink and mirror in the cage, part of Hsieh's installation. NYT PIC

tube of toothpaste he used during his year of isolation. (He insists he never ran out.) A friend, artist Cheng Wei Kuong, delivered his meals and removed his waste through a small opening between the bars every day.

Two months in, sick of eating nothing but Chinese broccoli with beef and rice, he threw the food on the ground to communicate his displeasure.

On the back wall of the cage are tally marks Hsieh carved with a nail clipper to record each passing day. The lines start off scratchy and raw and become progressively sharper — proof, he insists, that his thinking became clearer over time.

Hsieh has said that this work, "One Year Performance 1978-1979 (Cage Piece)," shows how individuals can experience psychological freedom even in the face of intense physical constraints. Every day, Hsieh, then 28, took himself for a walk "outside" — the empty space around the bed — before returning "home" to the mattress. In Dia's basement, he smiled as he circled the cage's interior, like a child showing off a blanket fort. "This is a street corner," he said at the far edge of the cage.

Hsieh prefers to describe his performances as "lifeworks" rather than "artworks." In "One Year Performance 1980-1981 (Time Clock Piece)," Hsieh punched a timecard clock every hour on the hour, including at night. He followed that up with "One Year Performance 1981-1982 (Outdoor Piece)," when he lived a nomadic life entirely outdoors in New York City, and "Art/Life One Year Performance 1983-1984 (Rope Piece)," when he spent the year tied to Linda Montano, an artist he hardly knew, with an eight-foot rope.

NYT

New museum on Frida's family life

A new Frida Kahlo museum reveals a warm and loving side of the famed Mexican artist, giving visitors a look at her private life beyond the pain and rawness of her well-known works.

The Casa Kahlo museum, opened a week ago by Kahlo's descendants in Mexico City, is imbued with the spirit of a family where women set the tone. "She's aunt Frida, daughter Frida, a Frida situated in the intimacy and security of family," said Adan Garcia Fajardo, director of the new museum.

Located in a building that was once Kahlo's parents' home and later her sister Cristina's home, it hosted lively gatherings of family and friends and was a studio for young painters studying with Kahlo. The exhibition includes nine original works and countless personal items, as well as photographs taken by Kahlo's father, Guillermo. Kahlo's close relationship with her sister Cristina — whom she called "the other half of my life" — is a major theme of the museum, as the house was a refuge for the painter who suffered from poor health and pain for much of her life.

A self-portrait by Frida Kahlo. PIC COURTESY: WIKIMEDIA

AFP

FEEDBACK
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ASTROSPEAK

Guruji Shrii Arnav

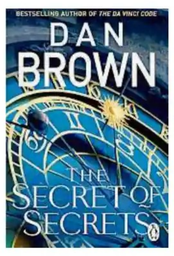
Scan the QR code to read the ***weekly horoscope***

Dan Brown's latest blends consciousness, myth and history, and despite the clunky prose, he keeps the thrills coming with his formulaic but signature flair, writes Rashmi Vasudeva

Soul decoding in PRAGUE

The beautiful city of Prague comes alive in this novel full of secret codes, mysterious cults and ancient legends. Seen here is the Czech capital's old town square.

Presumably, for those like me who read The Da Vinci Code before watching it, Robert Langdon remains a rather desirable man. Dan Brown's tweed-clad Harvard symbologist is both brainy and brawny; he also sports a Mickey Mouse watch for that touch of boyish charm. He decodes ancient mysteries like the professional sleuth he is — but now, rather lamentably, he has, in our collective imagination, the somewhat haggard face of Tom Hanks, who plays him in the film adaptation.



THE SECRET OF SECRETS
Dan Brown
Penguin, pp 704, Rs 1,499

In The Secret of Secrets, Brown's latest thriller after an eight-year hiatus, the action shifts to Prague—an inspired choice, really, for a writer so fond of mixing myth, science, and art, and of sending his indefatigable professor sprinting across historic bridges and crumbling staircases. This time, Langdon reunites with noetic scientist Katherine Solomon (last seen in The Lost Symbol), and there's a bit more spark in the professor's personal life than in earlier editions. The pair have landed in Prague for Katherine's guest lecture about her new book, which questions the very way we perceive consciousness. Trouble, of course, arrives on cue: several powerful people want the manuscript destroyed, and the author herself conveniently disappears.

Contemporary touch

Fans of Dan Brown — are you not already sniffing the formula? Oh, you are. Are there cryptic symbols? Yes. Ancient labyrinths? Indeed. Secret codes? Naturally. Greedy scientists and greedier billionaires? Absolutely. A selective, often dubious, mingling of fact and fiction? But of course! Yet this is a formula that still fizzes. Brown remains masterful at maintaining momentum; every brisk, bite-sized chapter ends with a cliffhanger that doesn't feel forced. And for the trivia lovers, there's plenty of "let-me-google-that" fodder scattered throughout to keep minds happily racing.

Dan Brown. (PIC COURTESY: WIKIMEDIA)

What really works this time around is the novel's contemporaneity and its thematic daring. The study of human consciousness is buzzing in both science and philosophy, and the question Katherine poses — what if consciousness itself is the secret of secrets — feels timely and provocative. Brown dips liberally into pseudoscience and metaphysical speculation, but his straight-faced seriousness somehow makes it all believable enough to suspend disbelief. Before you can roll your eyes, you're already turning the next page. Cleverly, he doesn't allow you much time to breathe—or think too critically.

Perfect playground

And then there's Prague, the perfect playground for Brown's brand of cerebral adventure. In this gorgeously mysterious city, every statue on the Charles Bridge and every coded carving seems to shimmer with significance. The city itself feels like a secret the author is guarding jealously—an accomplice to the golem, that clay-masked sentinel lurking in shadows. Brown's prose glows brightest when capturing Prague's Gothic atmospherics: its cobblestone whispers, its alchemical legends, its rain-polished spires. The writing, however, falters when it strays into dialogue. Natural conversation, as ever, remains Brown's Achilles' heel.

The Secret of Secrets doesn't quite shock the way The Da Vinci Code once did, but it's gentler, more introspective in tone. It flits deftly from quantum entanglement to near-death experiences, from cosmic energies to out-of-body phenomena. The tropes are evident, the pattern familiar — but Brown's pacing and confident sleight of hand ensure the journey remains gripping. He ducks under clichés, races around predictability, and somehow crosses the finish line triumphantly, even if you can see the track from miles away.

Brown paradox

That said, Brown, as is his wont, isn't big on subtlety. Midway through, the prose grows as dense and sweet as Shropshire fudge; at times, it reads like a transcript from a TED Talk — topics ranging from ancient symbols and museum artefacts to the "code of consciousness" and quantum energy. All this results in a doorstopper of nearly 700 pages that could have benefited from a firm, unsentimental editor with a red pen.

Still, that's the paradox of Dan Brown. You might skim his romantic interludes with mild embarrassment, yet you can't resist finding out how it all ends. He's an expert at serving up ambitious tales, irresistible conspiracies, and just the right balance of intellect and intrigue. While he's never pretended to be a highbrow literary stylist, he knows precisely how to craft high-speed, cleverly constructed fun. And as a bonus, his novels always double as first-class travel brochures — you'll close this one yearning to visit, or revisit, Prague.

In one sense, The Secret of Secrets occupies that middle ground between history lesson and feverish thriller. For all its ambition and density, it nudges us to reflect anew on a few fundamental questions we seem to have neglected. Are some secrets best left alone? Or is the greatest secret already known to us — one we simply refuse to acknowledge?

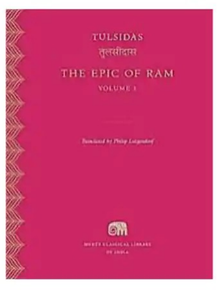
THE HERITAGE SHELF

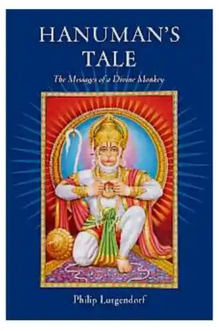
On the trail of the mighty Hanuman

The popular monkey god's 'kapitva' stubbornly endures despite some popular poster artists trying to portray him as a hairless muscleman with gleaming pecs and shiny abs, writes Philip Lutgendorf

I came to Hanuman through the Ramayana — especially through its captivating Hindi retelling by Tulsidas as the Ramcharitmanas, which I recently had the privilege of translating anew for the Murty Classical Library of India series. This wasn't an unusual trajectory. Tulsi himself declared near the end of his epic that "Rama's servant is greater than Rama himself" (7.120.8) and I had heard a similar sentiment expressed by some of the great scholar-devotees with whom I was fortunate to study in Varanasi and Ayodhya in the 1980s — one pointed out to me how few temples there were to Rama compared with those to Hanuman. It became a sort of seed-mantra for a research project that, like Hanuman's own furry appendage, grew and grew through years of pilgrimage, temple darshans, and interaction with numerous devotees. It eventually resulted in a 2007 book that I hope inspires readers to better appreciate Hanuman's complexity and appeal as a boundary-crossing being who mediates between cosmic categories and offers us humans the possibility of similar transcendence.

Fundamental to this role, I feel, is Hanuman's monkeyness (*kapitva*, in Valmiki's Sanskrit), which stubbornly persists despite the efforts of some modern people to historicise him as a tribal hero or evolutionary "missing link," or the tendency of some popular poster artists to turn him into a hairless muscleman with gleaming pecs and abs — though even they are obliged to include a simian jaw and tail.





But it is one of the irreducible fundamentals of the Ramayana that its long-suffering hero, who is also god Vishnu incarnate, is ironically obliged to ally himself, to rescue his kidnapped wife and kill her abductor, with a race of forest-dwelling creatures ranked as impure and low in the hierarchical bestiary of classical Indian thought. Of course, these are not ordinary monkeys — although earthly rhesus macaques and (especially) langurs may merit respect today as their distant kin — but demi-divine beings in simian form, spawned by the Vedic celestials to help Rama in his avataric mission. And Hanuman emerges, midway through the story and at a crucial turning point, as the most steadfast and effective of these helpers. His service is not only to Rama but also to Sita, whom he rescues from threatened suicide in the Sundarkand, which earns him, in Tulsi's version, her blessing of physical vigour and endless life. For his part, Rama confesses a debt to Hanuman that can never be repaid, and devotees have been (so to speak) cashing in on this ever since. For when appealing to any exalted but somewhat distant authority — whether a medieval raja or modern mantri — the easiest way to get one's petition considered is to submit it to a skilled go-between in the court or office. And the "son of the wind," who leaps oceans and moves effortlessly between worlds, is also "Rama's doorkeeper," as the Hanuman Chalisa (recited daily by millions) famously declares.

These are but a few of the facets of Hanuman's persona. Other roles must be mentioned, even if only briefly: as a shaman-like healer who rescues Rama and Lakshmana from the murderous clutches of "subterranean Ravana" (Mahiravana) in an old and popular appendage to the main story that is itself a mini-epic — and who continues to help sufferers from mental ills caused by malign "vestiges" of the past (*bhuts* and *prets* in traditional terminology) at healing shrines like Mehndipur in Rajasthan. As a paradoxical confluence of self-actualised power and selfless devotion — nicely encapsulated in the rhyming phrase "shakti and bhakti"— Hanuman epitomises and transcends the boundary-straddling role that anthropoid primates have long played for human societies.

Near the end of my Hanuman-yatra, I learned of yet another role for Rama's messenger: a single, rather eccentric late-20th-century text hailed him as "Lord of Environment and Ecology." Having witnessed more than half a century of environmental degradation worldwide and in India, I welcomed this and wondered whether others might join Hanuman in fighting these sankats ("afflictions") that now threaten all life on this planet.

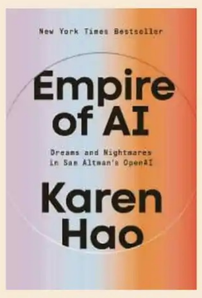
The writer is Emeritus Professor of Hindi and Modern Indian Studies, University of Iowa, and has authored and translated several books, especially related to the Ramayana.

The Heritage Shelf *is a monthly column from the Murty Classical Library of India, published by Harvard University Press, presenting India's greatest literary works and the enduring traditions that shaped them.*

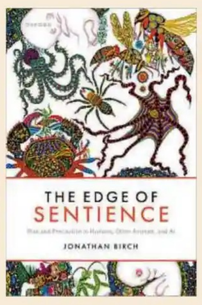
MOOD BOARD

Is all the talk about AI overwhelming you? Are you looking to update your AI gyaan without feeling foolish? Here are three books you can pick up:

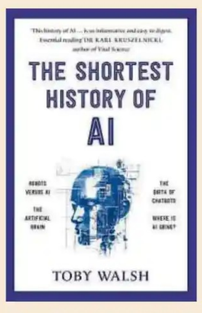
Empire of AI: Dreams And Nightmares in Sam Altman's OpenAI by Karen Hao (Penguin/2025):
This is a sharp, deeply reported analysis on OpenAI's rise, its ethical blindspots and its global impact. Hao weaves stories from Silicon Valley to Kenya, exposing AI's problematic colonial backstories. Smartly written, critical and unsettling in many ways, this is a must-read for anyone who wants to take a peek behind the AGI curtain.



The Edge of Sentience by Jonathan Birch (OUP/2024):
This is an unusual selection, but one that explores what sentience means when we build machines and treat other beings ethically. Birch asks how to decide when life "feels like life" and how we should act when we are not really sure. Grounded in solid research, this is an essential guide to understanding the moral frontiers AI is likely to breach.



The Shortest History of AI by Toby Welsh (Macmillan/2025):
This offers a concise and engaging overview of AI's evolution. Divided into six key ideas, the author traces AI from its symbolic era to the current rapidly developing phase. The book highlights milestones such as the birth of ChatGPT and DeepMind's AlphaGo. Accessible and informative, this is the ideal book for readers seeking a clear understanding of AI's journey.



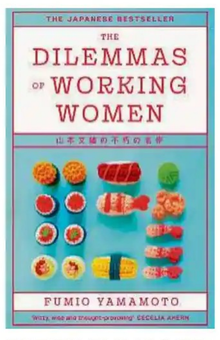
Mood Board *is a new column that presents thematic lists of books on hot-button topics.*

A world that runs on women's endurance

Yamamoto's fiction is a subtle commentary that captures with humour and melancholy the deep exhaustion of urban women, writes Anjali Chauhan

Yamamoto's critique unfolds through the mundane rhythms of everyday life. (PIC FOR REPRESENTATION)

At the turn of the millennium, Japan was undergoing quiet but seismic shifts. The economic bubble had burst, corporate restructuring had begun to reshape middle-class aspirations, and women, often educated, ambitious, and overburdened, found themselves suspended between old patriarchal expectations and new capitalist demands. It is against this backdrop that the late Fumio Yamamoto (1962–2021) published The Dilemmas of Working Women in 2000, a collection of five short stories that captured, with searing honesty, the emotional and moral turbulence of contemporary urban life.



THE DILEMMAS OF WORKING WOMEN
Fumio Yamamoto and Brian Bergstrom (translator)
Hachette, pp 288, Rs 499

Now translated into English brilliantly by Brian Bergstrom, Yamamoto's collection feels startlingly relevant even two decades later. Each story follows characters, mostly women, but occasionally men, who find themselves trapped in the contradictions of modernity: between work and leisure, desire and duty, autonomy and belonging. Through first-person narration, Yamamoto creates an intimate, sometimes uncomfortable proximity to her characters' inner worlds. Her tone is witty yet dark, tender yet unsparing, as she lays bare their loneliness, alienation, and longing for connection. Money, love, illness, and gendered expectations thread through these stories, revealing how economic life becomes inseparable from emotional life. In Yamamoto's hands, the dilemmas of work are never merely professional; they are existential, echoing through the body, the home, and the heart.

Yamamoto's fiction emerges from a distinctly feminist consciousness, though it never outrightly declares itself as such.

Her critique unfolds through the mundane rhythms of everyday life — the tired commute, the hollow small talk at work, the quiet ache of solitude after a long day. Post-bubble Japan was marked by economic uncertainty and the slow unravelling of the corporate dream, yet the social expectation that women maintain composure, beauty, and care remained intact. Yamamoto writes from within that contradiction. Her women are neither heroic rebels nor passive victims; they navigate a landscape where empowerment is both promised and denied. In doing so, The Dilemmas of Working Women becomes a subtle commentary on the gendered violence of neoliberal modernity, where freedom is conditional, and choice is often an illusion.

Beneath the performative politeness of office corridors and the allusive perfection of domestic order lies a deep exhaustion, one that Yamamoto captures with humour, melancholy, and a piercing sense of truth.

The story that lingered with me the longest is "Here, Which Is Nowhere," perhaps the most nuanced and haunting in the collection. Its protagonist, Maho, is a woman suspended in the thick fog of care work, tethered to the needs of everyone around her. For 21 years, she has tended to her husband, then her hospitalised father-in-law, her widowed and embittered mother, and her almost-grown children who treat her with contempt. Her husband's salary has been halved, forcing her into a part-time job that only deepens her exhaustion. The domestic space that should have offered rest becomes instead a site of endless service. Yamamoto renders Maho's world with such unflinching intimacy that the reader can almost feel the heaviness of her body, the dull ache of repetition, the silence between chores.

The emotional crescendo arrives when Maho's simmering rage erupts: she punches her son during an argument, only to be gutted by her daughter's words, "I don't ever want to become like you, Mum! I need to start working as soon as I can so I can be free of this place. I can't stand seeing the way you live!" It is a moment both devastating and familiar, where maternal love and resentment collide, and the generational cycle of female servitude exposes itself. Maho's longing for one night of undisturbed sleep, for a small moment of solitude, becomes emblematic of so many women's quiet, unfulfilled desires. Even when she finally allows herself a brief release, it changes little in the rhythm of her days. Yamamoto does not offer redemption; instead, she gives us the raw, unadorned truth of women's weariness, the emotional labour that keeps families and nations functioning while draining the very lives that sustain them.

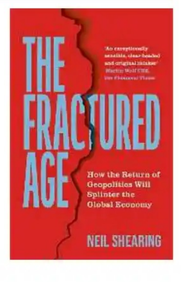
What makes The Dilemmas of Working Women so piercing is how easily its stories transcend the borders of Japan. The women in Yamamoto's world could just as well be found in Delhi's industrial belts, in cramped apartments in Dhaka, or in the open-plan offices of London and New York. Their struggles of endless emotional, mental, and physical labour are eerily familiar. Yamamoto writes them with compassion, revealing how such constant giving erodes the self slowly, imperceptibly. In their quiet fatigue, we glimpse a collective truth: that the world runs on women's endurance, even as it refuses to make room for their dreams.

READ OF THE WEEK

The tectonic plates of the global order are shifting, creating new pressures that will strain long-standing financial structures. But where will the world's new economic fault lines emerge? And how disruptive will they be?

In a clear and far-reaching reckoning, The Fractured Age by Neil Shearing lays bare the threats and opportunities that will shape the world economy over the coming decade. It charts the emergence of geopolitical blocs in a world undergoing profound change — blocs whose relative size and economic diversity will be pivotal in reordering everything from goods trade and investment flows to technology transfers and access to critical minerals. As the world enters another period of seismic upheaval and a new global order emerges, understanding which economies will benefit and which will bear the costs will be critical for effective decision-making throughout boardrooms and the halls of government. Neil Shearing lays out a stark vision of the peaks and rifts that will unfold, and how they will fundamentally reshape the global economy in this fractured age.

Neil is a recognised expert on the global economy and writes for the *Financial Times*. He also appears regularly on *Bloomberg TV*, *CNBC*, and *BBC News*, among others.



When life hands you a GONDHORAJ

The Gondhoraj, known for its heady fragrance, occupies pride of place in Bengali and Assamese cuisines, writes Sangeeta Sen

The oval-shaped lemon from eastern India has a thick rind.

Every lemon carries in its scent the story of its journey from shores near and far. This is also true of lemon varieties, infused with tart juices, grown in India several years ago, like the pale yellow elliptical-shaped Nemu Tenga or the Lisbon lemon. The Nemu Tenga originated from northern Myanmar and has been cultivated in Assam; the bright yellow rough-textured lemon, like the Lisbon lemon, was introduced to Goa by the Portuguese in the 16th century. The Jambhiri lemons arrived in Kashmir from Persia through the ancient Silk Road trade network.

But, there was an oblong or oval-shaped lemon, having a thick, rugged green rind and a heady, sweet floral scent, which outclassed the others. This was, indeed, the 'king of lemons', the Gondhoraj lebu (lemon), identified by various names, that had a fascinating journey, spanning many regions, in the distant past.

Gondhoraj by any other name...

The Gondhoraj is called by different names in different places. For instance, the aromatic Rangpur lemon is also a type of Gondhoraj lemon. During the British rule, the officers posted in Rangpur division (city in present-day Bangladesh) were so delighted by the sweet, zesty scent of Rangpur lemon in their gin that they carried loads of it on their return journey to England on the seas.

In the north-western regions of Bangladesh like Sylhet, the Gondhoraj was known as the Shatkora lime whose thick, slightly rough-textured green rinds imparted an intense lemony flavour to Sylheti lentil cuisines like the spiced masoor dal or fish curries.

Also, during the time of the British Empire, Assam had another variety of the fragrant Gondhoraj, the Kazi (aka Kaji) Nemu or the Jara Tenga lemon varieties that thrived in the alluvial soil-rich farmlands of Barak Valley region, the homeland of several Sylheti Bengalis. Soon, by way of the historical Brahmaputra river trade route between Assam and Bengal, the Gondhoraj made its way to Burdwan, Hooghly, Midnapore and other Gangetic regions of British era- Bengal.

In fact, for the zamindars of the Burdwan Raj, the fragrant Gondhoraj lemon was valued highly because of its uniqueness in transforming cuisines to higher levels.

The popularity of the Gondhoraj lemon, known by distinct names, has not slackened. As a matter of fact, in recent times, the uniqueness of the Gondhoraj has meant a burgeoning cultivation – it is cultivated extensively in regions bordering the vast coastal stretch of Sunderbans located in South 24 Parganas, West Bengal; southern parts of Assam like Cachar and Jharsuguda district in Odisha.

The Gondhoraj is an essential accompaniment on a Bengali plate.
DH PHOTO/A S PRANATI

Gondhoraj chicken gravy.
PHOTO BY AUTHOR

The favourable warm, humid climatic conditions combined with the rich alluvial soils of these regions have helped create the Gondhoraj lemon. Furthermore, the Gondhoraj's climate-resilience implies a broader acceptance of the lemon in agricultural practices, thereby, providing economic benefits for the harvesters.

Quintessentially Bengali

For a Bengali like me, the unique fragrance of the Gondhoraj lebu is special. The lemon has occupied a supreme place in our cuisines for hundreds of years. Curious about the distinct fragrance of the Gondhoraj, I flicked through a mixed bag of scientific texts and learnt that the release of essential aromatic oils like limonene and citral, on squashing or finely grating the lemon rinds, bring about that alluring citrusy, floral scent which enhances the flavour of innumerable Bengali dishes.

Take, for instance, the Gondhoraj ghol, the traditional refreshing Burdwan Raj-inspired lemonade, which I had at a traditional Bengali restaurant located in Ballygunge, Kolkata.

A sous chef, who supervised the food preparations during the live buffet held at the restaurant recently, made sure that the Gondhoraj lemon juice was stirred into the spiced ghol (a lassi-like mixture of yoghurt, water, black salt and sugar). He then followed it up by whisking the mixture to a smooth, frothy consistency.

When I decided to whip up Gondhoraj murgir jhol, a Burdwan Raj-inspired dish of a creamy chicken gravy, the scent of the lebu filled the air, as I drizzled its juice and leaves over the chicken before marinating it. The marinade again included finely grated Gondhoraj, along with yoghurt, cashews, and spices. Later, I made a creamy chicken jhol (gravy).

It's not just Bengal — there is a strong penchant for the highly aromatic Gondhoraj lemon even in other cultures too.

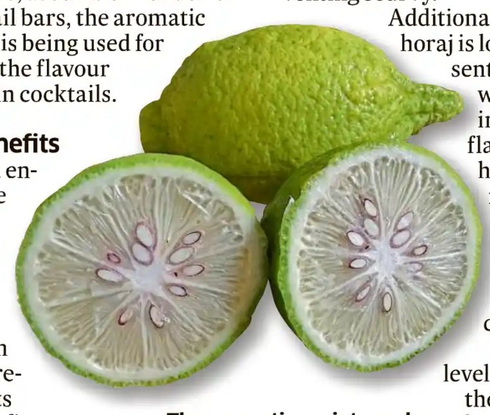
The split red lentils-based dish of Assam such as aam ada diya dali (spiced masoor dal cuisine cooked with aam ada/amada or mango ginger), uses the juice and leaves of the Kazi Nemu or Gondhoraj during the final stage of the cooking process.

Later, the dish is simmered briefly so as to bring out the delicate floral aroma and flavour of the lemon.

Elsewhere, at some of London's elite cocktail bars, the aromatic Gondhoraj is being used for enhancing the flavour profile of gin cocktails.

Health benefits

Apart from enhancing the flavour profile of a variety of cuisines, the Gondhoraj lemon has been preferred for its health benefits.



The aromatic variety makes for a refreshing lemonade.
DH PHOTO/A S PRANATI

During the British Raj, in 17th-century Bengal, the British officers and soldiers posted there considered the Vitamin C-rich Gondhoraj as an essential lemon variety for fighting ailments like scurvy. Even today, the Gondhoraj is recommended for preventing scurvy.

Additionally, the Gondhoraj is loaded with essential antioxidants which boost the immunity levels, flavonoids that have anti-inflammatory properties and limonoids which are known to have anti-cancer characteristics.

The significant level of citric acid in the Gondhoraj has been known to aid digestion.

It's no wonder then that this lemon variety from India's eastern states travels far and wide.

COOKING DILEMMA

Can lemon juice and zest be used interchangeably?

Lemon juice is used for salads and marinades, soups and grills...the list is endless. But what if a recipe calls for lemon zest and you don't have it handy? Can you still use lemon juice?

Zest is what you scrape off the surface of a lemon. You can gently grate a whole lemon with a grater or a microplane. Zest is distinct, flavourful and textured, while juice provides acidity. So if you need to cook something that does well with flavour and colour, go ahead with zest. On the other hand, if you are planning to cook something that needs acidity, it won't help to use zest, which lends a strong aroma but not enough tanginess or sourness..

If you do need to use lemon juice in place of zest, then ensure that you use two tablespoons of the liquid for every one teaspoon of zest that the recipe asks for.

When you use zest, be careful to grate it in such a manner that you don't get to the pith. If you were to use the pith portion, it may end up ruining the recipe and lending it a bitter taste. Zest also works well in dressings or infusions while lemon juice can help in balancing flavours. There are times when you can use either of the two, and that's when you bake lemon cakes or try seafood recipes.

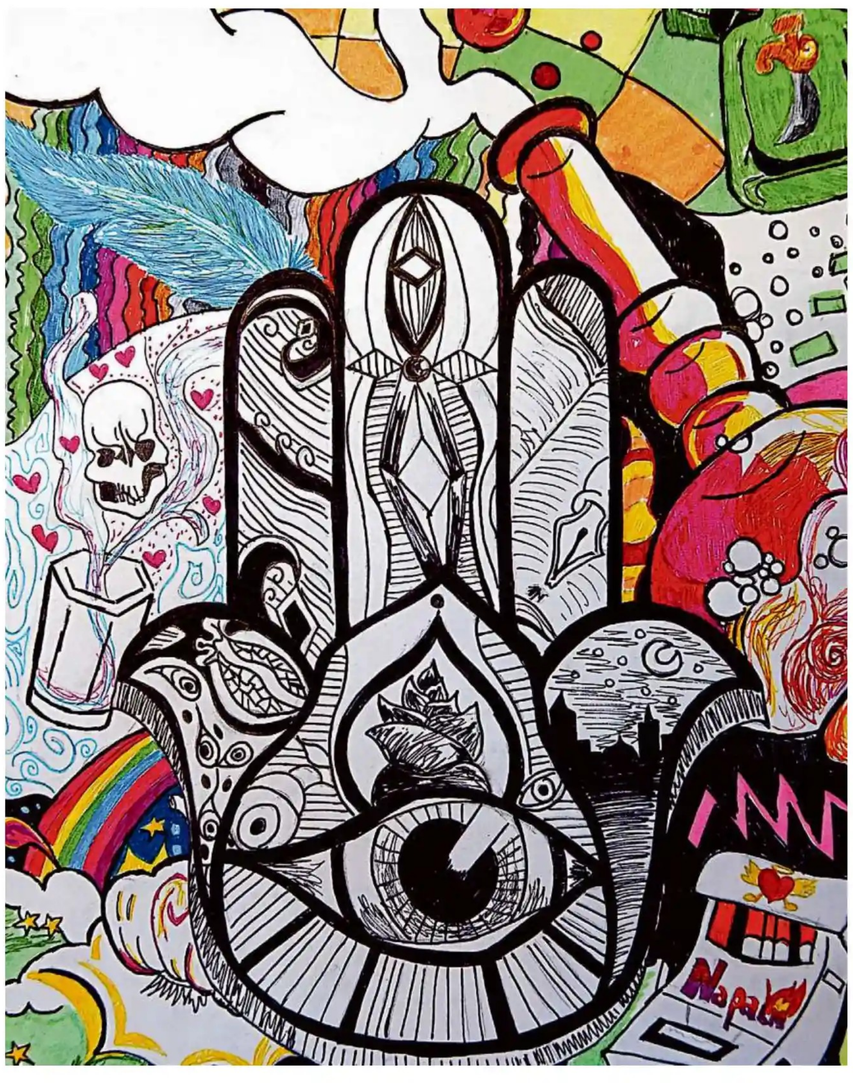
Both zest and juice go into the making of a lemon cake.

(Cooking Dilemma answers that one sudden question which pops up when you are about to try out a recipe but didn't know whom to ask.)

Wellness

Portraits of vulnerability

From substance to alcohol abuse, artists and creative individuals struggle to handle fame, emotional overwhelm and peer pressure, writes Rashikkha Ra Iyer



In a recent clinical encounter with a specific patient demographic, a striking phenomenon emerged: individuals within artistic communities often resort to substance use to augment or master their creative expression. As someone who actively engages in various creative pursuits, I found this relatively underexplored trend both intriguing and surprising. Further investigation, driven by curiosity, revealed a longstanding fascination within the research community regarding the intricate relationship between creativity and addiction, with studies intersecting mental health and cultural domains.

Notably, artistic communities worldwide have consistently demonstrated a higher incidence of addictive behaviours. Similarly, in India, analogous patterns have been observed across the creative industries, spanning the spectrum, from Bollywood to independent art. The intersection of creativity and addiction is a complex phenomenon observed in artists worldwide. Icons like Vincent van Gogh, Amy Winehouse, and Jean-Michel Basquiat have struggled with addiction, often deeply entwined with their artistic expression.

Research suggests that artists tend to exhibit risk-taking behaviour and emotional intensity, traits that correlate with substance use and behavioural addictions. In India, this trend is increasingly evident, with substance abuse reported among performers, musicians, and visual artists. The scope of addiction has expanded to include internet dependency, social media obsession, and workaholism, particularly among young creatives in urban hubs like Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Delhi. The arrests of some South Indian actors in connection with a suspected drug cartel earlier this year have further highlighted this issue.

Battling vulnerabilities

As a UK resident, I make it a point to stay updated on news from India, particularly developments that resonate with my roots. The passing of Tamil comedian Robo Shankar has left a profound impact on me. Although the details surrounding his life are subject to speculation, one narrative that stands out is his remarkable journey from humble beginnings to success. Robo Shankar was a gifted comedian who effortlessly brought laughter to his audience and made a lasting impression on reality TV shows.

However, his struggles with alcohol addiction painted a more complex picture. He courageously shared his story, and his decision to seek change was a testament to his resilience. Unfortunately, the toll of addiction on his health proved irreversible, cutting short the life of a talented individual who brought joy to many, including myself.

Shankar's story is not an isolated incident; several Indian celebrities have publicly battled addiction, including Sanjay Dutt, Ranbir Kapoor, Manisha Koirala, and Yo Yo Honey Singh. The pressures of fame, coupled with the creative industry's fast-paced and often tumultuous nature, can exacerbate vulnerabilities to addiction.

The creative profession's inherent traits, such as intense emotional expression, risk-taking, and a desire for new experiences, can increase the likelihood of substance use and addiction. Furthermore, the accessibility of substances, peer influences, and the glamourisation of substance use in some artistic circles can further contribute to the problem. As the stories of these celebrities illustrate, addiction can have severe consequences, but seeking help and support can lead to recovery and a renewed sense of purpose.

Experts identify several key factors that contribute to the heightened risk of addiction among artists. Artists often delve into the depths of human emotion, exploring themes of love, loss, and existential crises, which can lead to feelings of overwhelm and prompt some to seek solace in substances or compulsive behaviours as a form of escapism.

Gig economy and uncertainty

The freelance and gig-based nature of many artistic careers can create financial uncertainty, leading to stress and anxiety, and in the absence of stable financial security, some individuals may turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms. Additionally, mental health discussions remain stigmatised in many Indian households, discouraging individuals from seeking professional help, and instead, artists may resort to self-medication, further exacerbating their struggles with addiction. The glamourisation of substance use in Indian cinema and music can also have a profound impact on young and aspiring artists, portraying substance use as a normative or even desirable behaviour, and inadvertently contributing to the normalization of addictive behaviours.

In conclusion, addiction within India's artistic community is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. While art itself can be a powerful tool for healing, with art therapy and creative expression helping individuals recover and rebuild their identities, systemic change is also crucial. To support artists in their mental health journey, mental health education in art schools, accessible therapy and peer support groups, and regulation of substance portrayal in media are essential.

By celebrating sober creativity and fostering a culture of empathy and awareness, India can nurture its rich cultural heritage and contemporary creative talent, allowing creativity to flourish without the shadow of compulsion. Ultimately, this collective effort can help artists thrive and reach their full potential, free from the grip of addiction.

(The author is a multidisciplinary professional who works in the UK.)

MYTHBUSTER

Are detoxes any good?

MYTH: Detoxes and cleanses are restorative and good for your general health and well-being

The word detox has been part of mainstream health conversations for a while now. Earlier, it was largely used only in medical or clinical settings, where a health practitioner would ensure that toxins, such as poisons or harmful substances, are flushed out of the system. Today, a detox has come to be accepted as a wellness practice, one that can be done by anyone. There is a glut of detox diet programmes and packages, including liver and colon cleanse regimens, that claim to be restorative.

However, experts point out that there is not much research that supports the idea of detoxes. As early as 2015, a review published in the 'Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics' cited the absence of "compelling research" that backs the concept of detox diets. While ingredients like milk thistle and turmeric are often used in liver cleanses and detox products, John Hopkins Medicine hepatologists note the absence of "adequate clinical trial data in humans to recommend the routine use of these natural compounds for prevention."

The role of the liver, kidneys and the intestines is to remove waste, and in a healthy functioning individual, these organs are already performing detoxification, unless there is a consumption of some harmful or toxic substance that needs medical intervention.

Some detox diets may actually cause nutritional imbalances; detox supplements and products may contain certain herbs that may not necessarily work for all. Detox programmes can also lead to muscle loss, anaemia and electrolyte imbalances. Further, detox kits and products may also end up being a burden on your wallet.

Instead, sticking to the basics helps – ensure you have a balanced diet, exercise, hydration and sleep. Indulgence in junk food, sweets and carbonated/sugary drinks can pose a burden on your liver, so be mindful of your eating habits. Overindulgence could lead to problems like non alcoholic fatty liver disease, because of the accumulation of visceral fat around your organs.

(Mythbuster is a column that picks up a popular wellness belief and examines if it is true, false, or maybe lies somewhere in between.)

Lauren Carvalho visits Siem Reap and comes back with not just souvenirs but also insights into Cambodia's culture, food and history

Siem but different

When I landed in Siem Reap, a quiet city in northwestern Cambodia, I had no idea what was in store. After a long flight from Bengaluru, India, all I wanted was a few hours of sleep. However, the scenic drive to the hotel, with fruit-laden trees alongside the well-maintained asphalt roads, was a refreshing change for a Bengalurean like me. During the course of our four-day stay, Siem Reap revealed many more sights, sounds, smells and fascinating stories.

The stunning Angkor Wat is a must-visit when you are in Siem Reap.

Tryst with the locals

We spent much of our time cruising down the streets of Siem Reap in a rickety tuk tuk, listening intently to Lam, the driver we hired, who regaled us with stories from his past. A soldier-turned-tuk-tuk driver, Lam ferries tourists around, giving them the chance to experience Siem Reap intimately. He sleeps in his tuk tuk and rejoices when the monsoon rains wash the city clean. When heavy showers greeted us on our first day there, Lam generously offered us his two umbrellas for the duration of our stay.

Later, he took us to a local restaurant to try a classic Khmer dish called Amok, a creamy coconut curry scented with lemongrass, and paired with a meat, usually fish. Served in banana leaf bowls with a helping of rice, Amok became a staple on our trip. The Khmer cooking class was a special experience arranged at our hotel, and started with a visit to the local market. The buzzy marketplace was a sight to see, selling everything from exotic fruits and fresh meat to children's toys. Set up inside a large tent, it felt like a different world with people bustling around and the low hum of conversation in the air. This market had a unique charm to it and was a sharp contrast to the quiet streets.

A fine display of acrobatics by the Phare Circus. PHOTO BY AUTHOR

Back at the kitchen, we donned our aprons and chef hats, and got to work by assembling a platter of fillings for our spring rolls with the hotel's sous chef guiding us through every step.

As someone with little cooking experience, I found the class both challenging and enjoyable. On the menu: crispy vegetable spring rolls, fragrant fish amok and steamed rice. For dessert, we prepared a creamy banana sago pudding. The chef patiently demonstrated each step, encouraging us to smell, taste and ask questions about the dishes we were preparing. The immersive, hands-on class gave us a taste of Khmer cuisine and the meal felt well-earned.

Angkor Wat: If walls could talk

Of course, no visit to Siem Reap is complete without visiting its star attraction, Angkor Wat, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Pub Street, which is packed with bars and restaurants.

Angkor Wat (City Temple) gained prominence in the 12th century as a place of worship. Legend has it that thousands of elephants were used to transport stones from the Kulen mountains, situated around 50 km away, to build Angkor Wat. Constructed on 400 acres of greenery, the religious site took around 30 years to complete.

Next, it was time for some performance art. Watching Siem Reap's Phare ('brightness of the arts') circus was an unforgettable experience. Though it lacked the pomp and show of a traditional circus, audiences were left enthralled by a troupe of about 15 talented performers. From swinging on seemingly flimsy ropes launching themselves into the air in a series of graceful somersaults, this 90-minute performance kept me at the edge of my seat.

The Mi Phare acrobats are graduates from the Phare Ponleu Selpak School, an arts performance centre that promotes careers in circus performance. The school nurtures arts appreciation and gives underprivileged children employment opportunities in this unique field.

A dark history

While Cambodia boasts rich greenery, grand monuments, delectable food and culture, the country's history is overshadowed by a darker past. A mass genocide in the late 70s by the oppressive communist Khmer Rouge regime, led by the dictator, Pol Pot, took the country to the brink of collapse and led to the death of nearly two million locals.

Traditional souvenirs at a street market.

What began as a radical dream to erase class distinctions and establish an agrarian economy escalated into one of the most devastating massacres of the 20th century. Despite oppression and displacement, the people of Cambodia are resilient beyond measure.

Amok, a typical Khmer curry.

The tourism industry is seasonal and therefore quite volatile, but thousands of Cambodians depend on it as their main source of income. In the face of unpredictability, people show a sense of pride in their work, coupled with a fierce determination to share their rich culture and heritage.

From its ancient temples to its vibrant culture, a visit to Siem Reap is more than just a relaxing getaway — it also brings a much-needed shift in perspective.

The ability of the Cambodians to pick themselves up and persevere through the toughest of conditions stands out. I left Siem Reap with more than souvenirs, and took with me stories of resilience, generosity, and a belly full of warm and comforting Amok.

DO'S & DON'TS

Cambodia CALLING

Excited about your Cambodia trip? Here's a guide that'll help you enhance your travel experience once you land there.

Do's

- ✓ Dress modestly and stay mindful of local sensibilities – shorts, low-cut dresses are best avoided. In general, it's best to cover your shoulders and knees.
- ✓ Use loose-fitting and lightweight clothes because Cambodia is a humid country.
- ✓ Always leave your shoes at the door when you visit someone's home or a place of worship.
- ✓ When it comes to drinking water, opt for bottled water available in most hotels and restaurants. It is better not to use tap water while in Cambodia.
- ✓ Carry US dollars although Riel is the official currency in Cambodia.
- ✓ Keep in mind that the Riel has only recently been made available for exchange at a few international travel exchange counters. It is best to use US dollars for your transactions in Cambodia.
- ✓ Carry a hat, umbrella and bottled water when you are out sightseeing because the country sees both humidity and sudden showers.

Don'ts

- ✗ Avoid hugging or touching the hands or feet when greeting someone, including monks in places of worship
- ✗ Don't touch a Cambodian person on the head, as it is thought of as being irreverent.
- ✗ Never point your feet at either people or at places of worship, as it is considered disrespectful.
- ✗ It is also inappropriate to show your back to the idols/statues of the Buddha in places of worship.

(Do's & Don'ts is a column that tells you what to keep in mind and what to steer clear of, while heading to a particular destination.)

ADVERTORIAL

Advertorial

Hidden Gems in Our Own Backyard

Neil Patil
Founder, COO & CTO
Veena World
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...Travel doesn't always mean crossing oceans. Sometimes, it's about pausing, looking around, and realising the wonder that exists within a few hours of where we live...

If you've been following this space, you know how much I love flying and travelling far. But the truth is, sometimes we overlook the treasures that sit much closer to home. As Indians, we often dream of Switzerland's Alps, Japan's cherry blossoms, or New York's skyline. Yet here in our own country, tucked between familiar names, lie places that can surprise, delight, and even rival some of the world's best-known sights.

At Veena World, with over 350 tour managers and 900+ team members constantly on the move, hardly a day goes by without someone celebrating a milestone, visiting their 5th state, 20th country, or even their 50th. And every time, I'm reminded that while the world is vast, India itself is a world within a world.

So today, I want to share a few hidden gems—places that may not always make it to your first travel list, but deserve to.

Orchha, Madhya Pradesh – A Forgotten Kingdom by the Betwa

If Delhi has grandeur and Jaipur has royalty, Orchha has something rarer—an air of quiet magic. Tucked away on the banks of the Betwa River in Madhya Pradesh, this small town was once the capital of the Bundela Rajputs. Today, it feels almost like a secret, where time has slowed down, and history lingers in the stones.

Walk through the Orchha Fort complex, and you'll find yourself surrounded by palaces that whisper of forgotten courts and ceremonies. The Jehangir Mahal, built to honour the Mughal emperor Jehangir's visit, is a masterpiece of Indo-Islamic architecture. Its latticed balconies and delicate carvings overlook sweeping views of the river. Nearby, the Raj Mahal is humbler, but its faded murals—depicting mythological tales—still glow faintly, like echoes of colour from centuries past.

What struck me when I first heard of Orchha was its cenotaphs (chhatris). These towering memorials stand along the riverbank, silhouetted against the sky, reflecting in the Betwa's waters at sunrise and sunset. And then there's the Chaturbhuj Temple, whose massive spire dominates the skyline. Legend has it that it was originally built to house an idol of Lord Rama. But when the queen who commissioned it placed the idol temporarily in her palace, the idol refused to move—so today, Rama is still worshipped in the palace-turned-Ram Raja Temple, making Orchha the only place in India where Rama is revered as a king.

Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh – Where Music Meets Misty Hills

Ziro Valley, in Arunachal Pradesh, is a high-altitude valley that is a patchwork of rice fields, pine-clad hills, and villages where time seems to have slowed down just enough for you to notice the details.

Every September, Ziro Valley transforms into one of the most unique festival grounds in the world during the Ziro Music Festival. Imagine indie bands and folk musicians performing on wooden stages surrounded by mist, paddy fields, and mountains. There are no giant LED screens or stadium lights here—just music, community, and the hum of nature as the backdrop. It's as if the valley itself becomes an instrument.

But even outside of festival season, Ziro has its rhythm. Mornings begin with fog rolling over the fields, afternoons with treks to hilltops offering sweeping views, and evenings with simple meals and conversations by firelight. Unlike the bustle of bigger hill stations, Ziro feels personal, intimate, almost secretive—like you've stumbled into a story that not everyone has read yet.

For me, that's the charm of Ziro. It's not just a destination, it's an atmosphere. And it leaves you with the sense that sometimes, the best journeys are the ones that feel like whispers, not shouts.

Khajjiar, Himachal Pradesh – India's Mini Switzerland

Long before Instagram travel reels, there was a different kind of wanderlust at play. In 1992, the Swiss ambassador to India visited a tiny hill station in Himachal Pradesh and was so taken aback that he called it the "Mini Switzerland of India." That place was Khajjiar, a small meadow town tucked away near Dalhousie.

The comparison wasn't far-fetched. Picture this: rolling green meadows framed by cedar forests, a sparkling lake at the center, and snow-dusted peaks on the horizon. For many travellers from North India, Khajjiar has been the first introduction to landscapes that feel Alpine, yet are just a road trip away.

But beyond the postcard scenery, Khajjiar has a quiet, almost mystical charm. The Khajji Nag temple, dating back to the 12th century, still stands here—its wooden carvings a reminder of Himachal's deep spiritual traditions. Around the meadow, horses graze lazily, families picnic, and adventure seekers try zorbing or paragliding, all while the air smells faintly of pine.

What I love about Khajjiar is that it straddles both worlds. On one hand, it's the simplicity of a meadow where you can stretch out with a book, watch clouds float by, and let time pass without rush. On the other, it's the gateway to treks, drives, and deeper adventures into Himachal.

Majuli Island, Assam – The River Island of Culture

In the middle of the mighty Brahmaputra lies a place unlike anywhere else in India: Majuli, the world's largest river island. It's not just a geographical marvel—it's a living, breathing cultural landscape.

Majuli is the spiritual heart of Assam. It is home to ancient satras, Vaishnavite monasteries established in the 15th century by the saint Srimanta Sankardeva. These aren't just religious centres—they're schools of art, dance, and music. Step into one, and you'll hear devotional songs, watch monks perform mask-making, or see age-old plays that bring mythological tales to life.

But Majuli isn't only about tradition. Life here moves at a gentle, riverine pace. Villages are built on stilts to withstand the Brahmaputra's floods, fishermen cast nets from dugout canoes, and sunsets paint the river gold. For a traveller, it's both grounding and otherworldly—like time has slowed down, letting you soak in stories that feel timeless.

What makes Majuli particularly special is how fragile it is. Erosion from the Brahmaputra threatens its very existence, shrinking the island each year. Visiting isn't just about seeing a hidden gem—it's about witnessing a place that embodies resilience, culture, and the intimate bond between people and their river.

So there you have it, travel doesn't always mean crossing oceans. Sometimes, it's about pausing, looking around, and realising the wonder that exists within a few hours of where we live. Until next time, keep discovering, keep wondering, and always, Celebrating Life!

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At the ongoing Bukhara Biennial, Subodh Gupta's salt-infused kitchen pavilion weaves Indian-Uzbek traditions together, thus fusing heritage with art and food, writes Neeta Lal

Spice, clay and memory

In the heart of Bukhara, once a bustling Silk Road hub linking India and Central Asia, artist Subodh Gupta has built a kitchen that is also a monument. Salt Carried by the Wind, his domed pavilion of enamelware and ceramics, rises amid restored madrasas and caravanserais, part of the inaugural 2025 Bukhara Biennial (September 5-November 20) — touted to be Central Asia's largest contemporary art platform.

Long remaining distant from the world's major art circuits, in recent years, Uzbekistan has begun stepping onto the global stage. Despite its geographical isolation, a surge of cultural activity — from new institutions to international events — is rapidly transforming Uzbekistan from a little-known outpost into a rising centre of artistic exchange.

At the core of this transformation are state-led efforts such as the establishment of the Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA) in Tashkent, the inauguration of the Bukhara Biennial, and an expanding roster of programs aimed at youth and traditional crafts. Together, these initiatives highlight a dual ambition: to preserve and celebrate the nation's rich heritage while creating platforms for contemporary creativity.

The Bukhara Biennial itself — staged across restored madrasas, caravanserais, and domes in the city's old town — provides the perfect backdrop. It brings together over 80 international and regional artists, positioning Bukhara, long a Silk Road hub, as a new epicentre of creative exchange.

Subodh Gupta's Salt Carried by the Wind. PIC BY AUTHOR

Under the CCA, the Biennial has a lineup of Central Asian and international participants from 39 countries showcasing site-specific artworks and installations — all newly commissioned and made in Uzbekistan — as well as events, performances, scholarly programs, poetry, and culinary activations.

As I navigate the maze of works, it's clear that the CCA's mission goes beyond curation: they are amplifying local voices, connecting them to global dialogues, and transforming heritage sites into living, experimental hubs for contemporary creativity.

"Central Asia is seen as a blank space on the contemporary art map. With Bukhara, we want to show the world that our heritage is alive, evolving, and part of global conversations. By bringing together local and international artists, we have created a dialogue that celebrates tradition while embracing experimentation," Gayane Umerova, co-curator of the Bukhara Biennial, reflected on the event's significance.

In keeping with this overarching vision, Gupta's food-filled installation turns history into a shared, edible experience, tracing centuries of trade, spice, and cultural exchange while staging a conversation between Indian and Uzbek traditions.

In Bukhara, art and heritage converge, and salt — humble, universal, and infinitely migratory — becomes both metaphor and medium, seasoning memory itself. The installation is performative as much as sculptural. At intervals across the biennial, Gupta steps into the pavilion and cooks at a pop-up for a select international audience, turning his kitchen into a stage and the act of feeding into a collective rite. These meals — hybrid recipes that nod to Indian spice and Uzbek pilaf, to samsa and samosa — stage exchanges that are literal (recipes, ingredients, ceramic forms) and symbolic (hospitality as diplomacy, the domestic as international). "I always believe the kitchen is the most democratic space," says Gupta. "Around a table, differences collapse — food is the language we all speak." "Salt is simple," Gupta says, "but it is also history, survival, migration. It is the one element that unites kitchens from India to Uzbekistan." The pavilion's enamel exterior — borrowed from Soviet-era mass-produced kitchenware common in Uzbek homes — makes visible a lineage of material culture that has travelled east and west along the very routes that once carried spices, grains, and ceramics between India and Central Asia. Inside, suspended ceramic plates and hand-thrown tableware created with award-winning Uzbek master ceramist Baxtiyor Nazirov suggest that objects can carry memory as much as they carry food.

"When Subodh first spoke about salt as a travelling element, I immediately thought of the clay and ceramics that have moved along these same routes for centuries. Every plate and bowl carries stories — of families, of kitchens, of trade. Working together, we tried to make the objects speak, not just hold food, but hold memory. It's a dialogue between our traditions and a way to honour the past while creating something new," Nazirov reflected.

Collaboration underpins the work. The co-creation with Nazirov — and with local chefs and artisans — folds Indian and Uzbek traditions into one another. The enamel dome references a shared vernacular of household implements, while the bespoke interior ceramics are crafted in workshops where hands know glaze like language.

Mounting such a work in Bukhara was not without challenges. The city's restored historic fabric demanded sensitivity; every nail and ceramic had to negotiate conservation protocols and strict site rules.

Practical hurdles mattered too: shipping materials across borders, sourcing locally while respecting traditional workshops, and coordinating performances in venues centuries old. Gupta admits the challenges were formidable: "When you work with living heritage, you cannot force your way in. You have to listen to the space, respect its rhythm, and then find your place within it."

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Showroom Inauguration By
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FOR SALE- Converted Betterment Paid Land extent 35000 sqft A Khata. E Khata available. Opp to Kengeri Satellite Bus Stop Rs. 12000 per sqft. Brokers Excuse. Contact: 9880459141.

Kempegowda Layout

NADA PRABHU Kempegowda layout BDA Site For Sale 30x40, 40x60, 50x80 Contact: 7676900174 6363496142

SITES FOR sale Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout 'BDA' no. 1678, 40*60 south facing 'E' Sector 8th block, and no. 1046, 50*80 west facing 'K' Sector 1st block 330 feet peripheral ring road commercial property. 9980339217/ 9448709882

Multiple Locations

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Vijayanagar

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Vishweshwariah Layout

BUYING/ SELLING 20x30, 30x40, 40x60, 50x80 BDA Sites VISHVESHWARAIAH LAYOUT, KEMPEGOWDA LAYOUT, BANASHANKARI 6th Stage. Contact: 8892901567

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Nagarabhavi

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Vishweshwariah Layout

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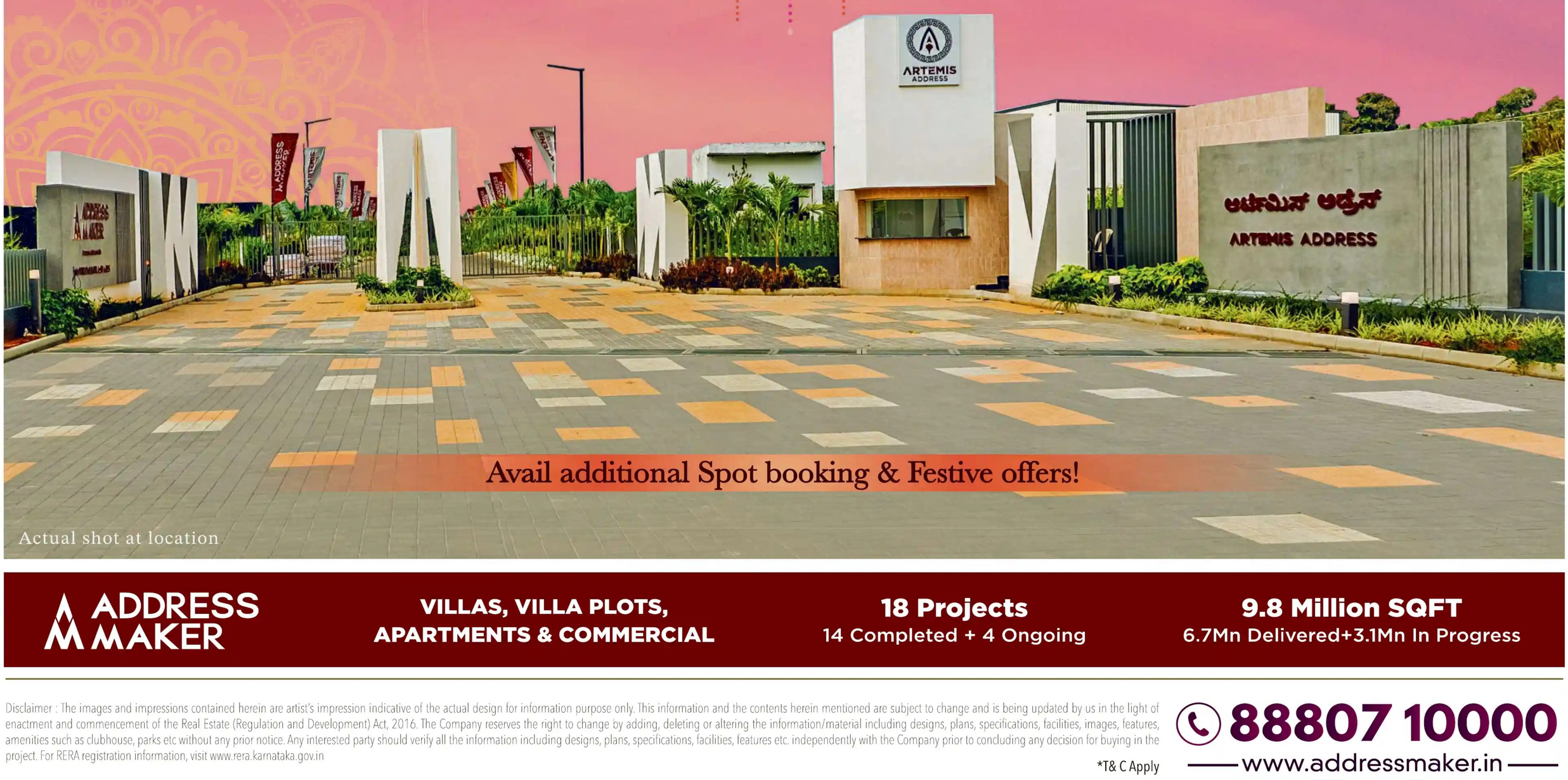

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